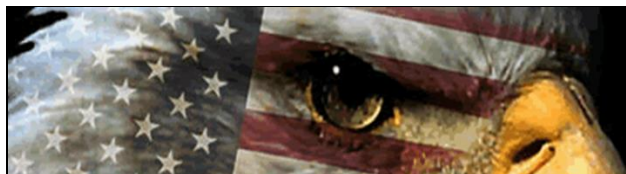



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## Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	10/19 Seattle human rights commissioners resign
SOURCE	<a href="https://seattlemedium.com/seattle-human-rights-commissioners-resign/">https://seattlemedium.com/seattle-human-rights-commissioners-resign/</a>
GIST	Members of the Human Rights Commission resigned en mass recently. The feeling seems to be that there was not strong support coming from the City. The resigning members says they suffered greatly

from the emotional toll of their consistent stance of conflict, distrust and blatant disrespect of their time, maturity, and autonomy.

The commission has been around since 1963. On it's website, it states that it is in place "to advocate for justice and equal opportunity, to advise the City of Seattle on human rights issues, and to collaborate with public and private sectors in order to educate them on methods to prevent and eliminate discrimination city-wide."

The Seattle Human Rights Commission consists of 21 representative residents of Seattle appointed to serve in an advisory capacity to the Mayor, City Council, Seattle Office for Civil Rights, and City departments in matters affecting human rights. Eight commissioners are appointed by the Mayor, eight are appointed by the City Council, and four are appointed by the Commission.

The commissioners shared their reasoning behind our decision. This is the letter that was sent out:  
*As you continue (or not, no judgement!), we who depart urge the remaining Commissioners to learn from our experience and protect yourselves. We are not volunteer event planners, we deserve to spend our time and resources in the way we feel most fit to benefit the community. You have the power to define your own work.*

*You've shared yourselves, your passion and expertise with me and there is nothing more valuable to me. I only regret having to prioritize my own psychological wellbeing over directly supporting you. But, my harmed self is no good for you, and I'm sorry.*

*I thank you all for your support, and please stay in touch as you are always welcome.  
In solidarity,*

*Julia Ismael, she/her*

The human rights commissioners in Seattle are appointed to a two-year term of office and serve without pay. The 21st member joins the Commission each year through Get Engaged, a leadership development program for 18-29 year olds. In addition, the Seattle Office for Civil Rights provides staff and support to the Commission.

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HEADLINE	10/18 USDA: \$1B debt relief for 36,000 farmers
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/biden-health-covid-iowa-us-department-of-agriculture-a520df60c52a704ec98098d56cf2ea18">https://apnews.com/article/biden-health-covid-iowa-us-department-of-agriculture-a520df60c52a704ec98098d56cf2ea18</a>
GIST	<p>DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — The federal government announced Tuesday a program that will provide \$1.3 billion in debt relief for about 36,000 farmers who have fallen behind on loan payments or face foreclosure.</p> <p>The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced the farm loan relief program funded from \$3.1 billion set aside in the Inflation Reduction Act allocated toward assisting distressed borrowers of direct or guaranteed loans administered by USDA. The law was passed by Congress and signed by President Joe Biden in August.</p> <p>The USDA provides loans to about 115,000 farmers and livestock producers who cannot obtain commercial credit. Those who have missed payments, are in foreclosure or are heading toward default will get help from the USDA. Financial difficulties for farmers may be caused by a variety of issues including drought and transportation bottlenecks.</p> <p>"Through no fault of their own, our nation's farmers and ranchers have faced incredibly tough circumstances over the last few years," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "The funding included in today's announcement helps keep our farmers farming and provides a fresh start for producers in challenging positions."</p>

About 11,000 farm borrowers delinquent on direct or guaranteed loan payments for 60 days or longer are receiving automatic electronic payments to get them current on their loans. Each farmer with a direct loan received about \$52,000 and those with guaranteed loans received about \$172,000. The total cost for this group is nearly \$600 million. Farmers who received this help will get a letter informing them that their payments have been made and they will remain current until their next annual payment is due in 2023, Vilsack said.

Another \$200 million has been used to immediately help 2,100 farm borrowers after their loans had been foreclosed but who still owed money and had their tax refunds and other resources taken by the U.S. Treasury. The money will be used to pay the money these farmers owe to give them a fresh start, Vilsack said. The USDA said farmers in this category received an average of \$101,000.

Another \$571 million will be used help several additional groups including:

—7,000 farmers who during the COVID pandemic delayed loan payments to the end of their loans. This will cost \$66 million.

—1,600 farmers that face bankruptcy or foreclosure will get help on a case-by-case basis with individual meetings to assess their problem and find solutions at a cost of \$330 million.

—14,000 financially distressed farm borrowers facing cash flow problems who ask for help to avoid missing a loan payment will receive additional assistance. Vilsack said these issues could be brought on by drought or by low levels on the Mississippi River that is slowing barge traffic causing grain transportation issues. Up to \$175 million will be available for this program.

The money announced Tuesday is the first round of payments designed to help insure the farmers stay in business or re-enter farming.

The remainder of the \$3.1 billion will be used to help relax unnecessary loan restrictions and provide further assistance to be announced later, the USDA said.

Farmers assisted by the program have been found by the USDA to be distressed borrowers hard hit by pandemic-induced market disruptions exacerbated by more frequent, more intense, climate-driven natural disasters, the USDA said.

President Joe Biden and his administration continue to endure criticism for enacting a program to forgive some college loans but some of the Republican politicians who have criticized that program did not respond to questions about whether they support the farm loan help.

The USDA also provided \$31 billion to help nearly a million farmers offset lower sales, prices and other losses due to the coronavirus pandemic in 2021 and 2022, the U.S. Government Accountability Office has said.

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HEADLINE	10/19 Ukraine, Russia brace: battle for Kherson
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/10/19/Ukraine-Kherson-evacuations-Russia/5321666177282/">https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/10/19/Ukraine-Kherson-evacuations-Russia/5321666177282/</a>
GIST	<p>Oct. 19 (UPI) -- Officials in Moscow-controlled Kherson said on Wednesday they were moving civilians while Ukraine instituted a news blackout in the area, indicating an upcoming battle for the city and region.</p> <p>The Kremlin had seized Kherson, a key southern Ukrainian city, early during its invasion of the country but has since been under the pressure of a counter-offensive ordered by Kyiv. Ukraine had previously announced success in winning numerous small villages as their forces inched closer to Kherson.</p>

Vladimir Saldo, the Moscow-installed leader of Kherson, said some 60,000 civilians will be evacuated from the Kherson region over the next six days. The Kremlin has claimed it has annexed Kherson and three other Ukrainian regions to the south and east.

Saldo said the evacuations were needed so Russian troops can "act resolutely" in dealing with the Ukraine counter-offensive.

"I drove through the regional center this morning. On the exterior, there was nothing to suggest there was a lot of pressure," Saldo said, according to The Guardian.

"But when I arrived at the river port I saw that the boats were waiting and are already loaded with people ready to go to the left bank of the Dnipro, [The situation] is getting tense."

Kherson remains symbolically pivotal because it is the only regional capital Russia has been able to capture since the start of its invasion in February.

Meanwhile, the United States, Britain and France said they will meet Wednesday to discuss Iran's donation of so-called "Kamikaze" drones that the Kremlin had been using to attack civilian areas. Five people were killed in Kyiv on Monday and three more on Tuesday.

The Ukrainian military said it shot down 13 of the drones over Mykolaiv overnight while Russia claimed it turned back an effort by Kyiv to retake control of the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant by boats with Ukrainian special forces.

The British Defense Ministry said Russia overall continues to struggle on the battlefield with four of the five generals with direct operational command of elements of the invasion being dismissed.

"Their replacements have so far done little to improve Russia's battlefield performance," the ministry said on Twitter. "The lack of command continuity will likely be more disruptive than in a Western military because under Russian doctrine the development of plans sits largely with the commander personally, rather than as a collective effort across a broader staff."

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HEADLINE	<b>10/19 Bread prices skyrocket: Europe inflation</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/business/europe-food-prices-inflation.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/business/europe-food-prices-inflation.html</a>
GIST	<p>Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the price of the wheat that Julien Bourgeois grinds for boulangeries at his family's flour mill in central France has increased more than 30 percent. The bill for the electricity needed to run the mill has tripled. Even the price of paper used for flour sacks has hit the stratosphere.</p> <p>All of which are driving up the price of a loaf of bread.</p> <p>"Inflation is brutally high," said Mr. Bourgeois, inspecting the mill's mammoth crushers as they ground wheat into flour. He has urged the 1,000 bakeries that his company, Moulins Bourgeois, supplies to mark up the iconic French baguette by 10 cents, from a current range of one euro to €1.30, to offset the higher costs that he has had to pass along.</p> <p>"Consumers can afford to pay more for now, but prices will keep rising," Mr. Bourgeois said. "It's worrisome." In France, where baguettes already cost over 8 percent more than they did a year ago, he added, "we remember that the revolution started over the price of bread."</p> <p>As inflation continues to flare across Europe, few matters are causing more concern than the cost of a basic loaf. From France to Hungary, the most essential food staple is more expensive than ever. Bread prices are up an average of nearly 19 percent from a year ago in the European Union — a huge increase after a rise of just over 3 percent the year before, according to Eurostat, Europe's statistics agency, in a report released on Wednesday.</p>

The price of food overall has spiked to record levels, reflecting one of the biggest inflation surges in decades and leaving households with less money. In the 19 countries that use the euro, [consumer prices](#) rose to a record 9.9 percent in September from a year earlier, and by nearly 11 percent across the European Union, the highest in 40 years. Food prices in the eurozone climbed by a record [14.1 percent](#) in the year through September, while the cost of energy surged by over 40 percent.

High consumer prices are a continuing concern in the United States, as well. The pace of inflation, [near a four-decade high](#), remains elevated even as the [Federal Reserve](#) has undertaken aggressive policy actions to try to cool the economy. The price of bread in the United States, for instance, increased nearly 15 percent over the year through September.

The war in Ukraine has made matters worse, roiling food and energy markets and driving up prices for grains, oilseeds and fertilizers, Eurostat said, all of which are affecting the price of bread.

Hardest hit are the Baltic and Eastern European countries near the conflict zone that depend on grain exports from Ukraine, Europe's biggest farmland. The price of bread has shot up by 77 percent in Hungary over the past year, according to Eurostat, and over 30 percent in Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia.

The whirlwind has come as a shock in Germany, where the cost of bread has shot up over 18 percent in a year, as overall inflation has zoomed into the double digits, too, reaching 10.9 percent in September.

Fine Bagles, a bakery in Berlin, recently raised prices for its New York-style bagels to €1.20 from €1.10, and not without considerable angst, said Alice Zuza, an employee.

"There was a debate at the bakery," Ms. Zuza said. "The owners didn't want to raise prices, but, in the end, we didn't have a choice."

Russia's willingness to use energy as a weapon against countries supporting Ukraine has inflamed problems by raising gas and electricity costs for flour suppliers. Bills are also soaring for [energy-dependent businesses](#), including thousands of industrial and craft bakeries that run ovens most of the day.

In the Netherlands, a phalanx of bakeries have gone out of business since the end of summer as energy costs have soared. Bakeries in Belgium are raising prices, but one in 10 has been forced to shutter, with more closures expected before the end of the year.

At [Velzelio Duona](#), an artisanal bakery in northern Lithuania, Vaidas Baranauskas has tried to avoid a similar fate. His loaves of traditional rye, made with his grandmother's recipe, are especially prized. This year, he pushed up prices 33 percent, to as much as €12 a loaf, to offset a jump in the cost of flour, sunflower oil and sugar. The price of dried fruits and seeds used in some breads has doubled.

To curb energy bills, Mr. Baranauskas covered his roof with solar panels. But as winter approaches and the skies darken earlier, he is having to buy electricity at prices that are 500 percent higher than a year ago. He and his six employees now run the ovens four days a week, instead of five, to save money.

"Nothing like this has ever happened before," Mr. Baranauskas said. "It is a hard time when a lot of companies will have to choose if it is relevant to proceed with their production."

Industrial bakeries aren't immune. Major European supermarkets that sell huge quantities of bread have tried to keep prices as low as 30 or 50 cents per loaf by haggling with suppliers over how much they pay for ingredients and energy. But stubbornly high costs forced many to mark up prices. In Hungary, where most bread is sold in supermarkets, prices have more than doubled since last year, according to Eurostat.

Inflation is also adding to the cost of running a business in Europe by prompting workers, who are trying to make ends meet as their living costs spike, to demand higher wages.

Attila Pécsi, the owner of Arán Bakery, in the popular Seventh District of Budapest, said he had raised the salaries of his 30 employees twice this year. Payroll expenses account for around half the cost of a loaf of bread. Raw materials and energy constitute another third.

With expenses climbing, Mr. Pécsi has raised bread prices 12 percent since January. He is planning another increase before the end of the year. And consumers expect more to come, he said.

That is because prices are unlikely to retreat, said Johan Sanders, the president of Fedima, the European federation of bakery suppliers.

“This is the first time in many years that we’ve seen inflationary effects in staple foods,” Mr. Sanders said. “It’s daunting because it’s there to stay, and it will be difficult to deflate prices.”

Mr. Bourgeois of the flour mill outside Paris was preparing for just that situation. Russia’s war had already prevented Ukraine’s farmers from planting a full crop for 2023, he noted. “Our fortunes are very linked to the war,” he said. “If it keeps up, then cereal prices will stay high for a long time.”

Moulin Bourgeois’s production costs have jumped 30 percent in a year. The electricity bill alone will soon rise to €200,000 a month from €50,000 in 2021. Mr. Bourgeois spends countless hours managing the economics of his business, which started as a single water-wheel-powered stone mill set up by his great-grandfather in 1895 and is now an automated operation with 18 silos, across six acres, able to grind 450 tons of wheat a day.

Recently, he sent a somber letter to the 1,000 bakeries he serves. “Dear clients,” it began. “Never has the price of commodities and energy been as high as it is today. We are obliged to raise our prices on Nov. 1. We encourage you to raise your prices to make up the difference — 10 cents per baguette is reasonable.”

At a popular boulangerie in the leafy village of Crécy-la-Chapelle, 40 minutes north of Mr. Bourgeois’s mills, the owners, Serge and Marie Pinguet, were trying to postpone that fateful day.

“In France, when bread prices in the corner bakery rise even 5 centimes, people notice it immediately,” Ms. Pinguet said as a line of customers, drawn by the scent of freshly baked baguettes, snaked out the door.

The couple aren’t raising baguette prices for now, out of fear that even loyal clients might turn to supermarkets. But they are increasing the price for croissants and patisserie to make up the difference.

“Prices are changing so fast,” said Mr. Pinguet, who comes in at 2 a.m. every day to start making bread dough for the morning rush. The cost of butter doubled in one year, to €12 a kilo, he said, while sugar now costs 30 percent more. Mr. Pinguet now pays €78 for a carton of 360 eggs, up from €39.

While the sacred baguette is still affordable, he said, “all commodities have risen, so prices will keep going up, not just this year but probably for the next two to three.”

“And when prices rise too much, people won’t be able to buy,” Mr. Pinguet said. “It’s a vicious circle.”

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HEADLINE	10/18 Uganda Ebola outbreak: no working vaccine
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wired.com/story/uganda-ebola-outbreak-vaccine/">https://www.wired.com/story/uganda-ebola-outbreak-vaccine/</a>
GIST	<b>THE OUTBREAK BEGAN</b> on September 15. A 24-year-old man, suffering from a high fever and convulsions, was <a href="#">admitted to Mubende Regional Referral Hospital</a> in Uganda. He had bleeding in his eyes and had been passing blood-stained vomit and diarrhea. The man died on September 19. The next day, laboratory tests confirmed the worst fears of those caring for him: Ebola was back.



And this outbreak is different. Ebola is a disease of multitudes. For the most common species of the virus, successful vaccines have already been developed. But for others, no vaccine exists. To the dismay of health officials in Uganda, the version of the virus found in the body at Mubende was from the Sudan species, for which there is no vaccine.

Other Ebola deaths have also been reported in the region. Six people from the man's family, three adults and three children, also died between September 11 and 15. The Uganda Ministry of Health dispatched a rapid response team to the affected villages in Mubende district to do a verbal autopsy—collecting information on the likely cause of death from local people. The risk of infection from conducting a physical autopsy would be too high.

By October 16, the Ministry of Health had reported 60 confirmed cases of Ebola, having registered 11 new cases in the previous two weeks. In total, 24 deaths have been confirmed, including four among health workers, along with 24 recoveries.

That as many people have died as have recovered is striking, but not surprising. Ebola is a rare but highly dangerous viral disease that kills [roughly 50 percent](#) of people who fall ill with it. Fruit bats are thought to be the natural host of the virus, but it can also infect primates, rodents, and humans, spreading via the bodily fluids of infected animals or people, both alive and dead.

Ebola has flared up intermittently in Africa for more than 40 years, most notably during an outbreak between 2013 and 2016 that infected 28,000 people and took more than 11,000 lives. During that outbreak, experimental vaccines against the most common form of the virus—the Zaire species—could be tested. They worked well, and have since been approved and used to protect people. But developing vaccines for rare viruses like Ebola is always a game of cat and mouse. The Sudan virus behind the current outbreak has caused only a handful of human cases over the past two decades. Work to develop vaccines to target this virus is underway, but none have been fully tested, let alone finished.

Using a Zaire vaccine against the Sudan virus isn't an option, says Pontiano Kaleebu, director of the Uganda Virus Research Institute. "This has already been proven in the laboratory. The neutralizing antibodies do not respond," he says. This means two things: that surveillance and physical control measures are currently the only tools available for limiting the virus's spread, and that a working vaccine needs to be found as quickly as possible.

The candidate that's farthest along is the single-dose ChAd3 Ebola Sudan vaccine, which is being developed by the Sabin Vaccine Institute, a nonprofit based in Washington, DC. By working with the World Health Organization (WHO), the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, and other organizations, the institute is planning to run a clinical trial in the current outbreak to see how well the vaccine works.

But there are only 100 doses available. With limited supply, health officials plan to give doses of the vaccine to immediate contacts of confirmed Ebola cases. Scientists then hope to use these contacts as potential candidates in the vaccine's clinical trial—though the exact testing protocol they will use is still being worked out.

Kaleebu says they are hoping for accelerated production from the Sabin Vaccine Institute now that more doses are needed. But even if the number of vaccines used in the trial is small, they will still provide useful data, says Bruce Kirenga, a senior respiratory physician at Makerere University College of Health Sciences on the outskirts of Kampala.

"Trials use power calculation," Kirenga says, referring to sums that allow researchers to work out the minimum number of people you need to involve to see whether a vaccine or medicine has an effect. A well-designed trial in an emergency situation in need of a drastic change of course—such as whether a vaccine stops someone from getting or dying from a severe disease like Ebola—doesn't necessarily need to involve lots of people.

Doses of another candidate vaccine, designed to protect against both the Zaire and Sudan forms of the virus and developed by the University of Oxford, are also being sent to help in the outbreak. But the WHO [has said](#) that vaccine trials won't start for another couple of weeks, meaning that for now, Ugandan authorities are relying on non-pharmaceutical interventions.

Contact tracing is being used to follow people who have been close to known cases, with more than 1,500 contacts having been traced as of October 16. Over a third of these are no longer being followed, having been traced for 21 days without developing symptoms.

New cases are also being picked up outside of the contacts being traced, says Daniel Kyabayinze, director of public health at Uganda's Ministry of Health. "It's a good sign of optimal surveillance," he says. But it is also a sign that the limits of the outbreak are still uncertain.

On October 12, the Ministry of Health announced that a man had died of Ebola in a hospital in Kampala, having traveled to the capital from his local village. Three days later, two districts—Mubende and Kassanda—entered a three-week lockdown to try to stop the virus spreading. Bars, nightclubs, and places of worship have been closed, and only cargo trucks are allowed to enter or leave the districts.

With the risk of infection so high, trained teams are also being dispatched to bury the dead. And, at the same time, they are helping with the contact tracing—taking the details of all people the deceased could have had contact with. The Ministry of Health is also training health workers to handle Ebola cases, and communities are mobilizing volunteers and those who have previously worked in Ebola case management to take part in control efforts.

Neighboring countries have also stepped up their vigilance. Common border points between Uganda, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are both surveilling the virus and isolating known contacts. In Uganda, border health control teams are managing any emergency cases of Ebola among travelers. It's a challenge. "The tests we have don't work for the two viruses," says Otim Patrick Ramadan, health emergency officer at the WHO Regional Office for Africa. Two monoclonal antibody treatments—which enlist the immune system to fight against diseases—recommended for treating the Zaire virus also don't work against the Sudan virus, he says.

Despite the hard task Uganda faces, the WHO has expressed optimism about its ability to tackle the outbreak. "Thanks to its expertise, action has been taken quickly to detect the virus, and we can bank on this knowledge to halt the spread of infections," Matshidiso Moeti, the WHO regional director for Africa, said on October 6. "Uganda is no stranger to effective Ebola control."

If Covid-19 was a big reminder of the threat of emerging infectious diseases, then Ebola is a quieter but equally dire warning. To a degree, the world got lucky with the pandemic: If something as transmissible as SARS-CoV-2 and as deadly as Ebola emerged in the future, the resulting outbreak would change the course of history.

To prepare for the worst case scenario, lessons must be learned from this outbreak—and where it came from. Ebola and Covid-19 are both diseases that jumped to humans because humanity continues to encroach on wild areas of the planet. "People are going to look for food, or they are mining, or it's leisure activities," says Otim. "As the frequency in interaction between humans and animals increases, we pick up these viruses from them."

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HEADLINE	10/18 Dutch deploy killer robot ground vehicles
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.vice.com/en/article/jgpax3/the-netherlands-has-deployed-natos-first-killer-robot-ground-vehicles">https://www.vice.com/en/article/jgpax3/the-netherlands-has-deployed-natos-first-killer-robot-ground-vehicles</a>
GIST	The Netherlands has <a href="#">deployed</a> four armed ground robots or unmanned ground vehicles (UGVs), making it the first NATO country to do so. The robots are Tracked Hybrid Modular Infantry Systems (THEMIS) UGVs built by the Estonian defense company Milrem Robotics. It has treads like a tank and can use a variety of weapons. Photos provided by the Dutch military show their UGVs outfitted with machine guns.



*Janes*, a military and intelligence trade journal, [first reported](#) the story. The UGVs were first deployed on September 12 and, according to the Dutch Ministry of Defense (MOD), are an experiment.

“We have deployed four weaponised [unmanned] machines within an operational experiment”, Lieutenant Colonel Sjoerd Mevissen, commander of the Royal Netherlands Army's Robotics and Autonomous System, [told \*Janes\*](#). “To my knowledge, we have not seen this before in the West...the machines have been handed over for experimental use in an operational unit in a military-relevant environment. These are not simply tests on a training ground. We are under the direct eyes and ears of the Russians, and as such in a semi-operational environment.”

The machine-gun-toting robots aren't the first the world has ever seen. Estonia first deployed an [unarmed](#) version of THeMIS in Mali in 2019. This Russian MoD confirmed it [deployed armed UGVs](#) in Syria in 2018. Iran has also been developing its own UGVs and showed off its [Heidair-1](#) on social media in 2019. Iran's small beetle-like drone seems designed to roll under tanks and APCs and explode.

Both Russia's Uran-9 and Estonia's THeMIS are bigger and can carry more deadly equipment. The Uran-9 is capable of carrying a 30mm 2A72 automatic cannon and four 9M120-1 Ataka anti-tank guided missiles, which makes it look like a frightening and deadly killer robot. However, early reports indicate that Russia's UGV [didn't work well](#) in Syria and repeatedly lost connection to its controller.

During the summer, a [video of a robot dog](#) with an assault rifle strapped to its back went viral on the internet. Earlier this month, Boston Dynamics promised it [wouldn't weaponize](#) its brand of robot dogs. The video was creepy and Boston Dynamics' sentiment was aimed at calming down the public, but the truth is that killer ground robots are already here and that the world's militaries aren't interested in strapping a gun to the back of a quadruped even if they might have other uses on a near-future battlefield.

Gun-toting killer ground robots were always going to look like what the Dutch have deployed and what the Russian's tested in Syria—little tanks bristling with guns and absent humans.

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HEADLINE	10/18 Filthy floodwaters flesh-eating infections
SOURCE	<a href="https://arstechnica.com/science/2022/10/filthy-floodwaters-from-hurricane-ian-drove-wave-of-flesh-eating-infections/">https://arstechnica.com/science/2022/10/filthy-floodwaters-from-hurricane-ian-drove-wave-of-flesh-eating-infections/</a>
GIST	<p>In the devastating aftermath of Hurricane Ian, some of Florida's hardest-hit areas are facing a new threat—a wave of flesh-eating bacterial infections that can crest in sewage-contaminated floodwaters.</p> <p>In the weeks since the natural disaster, authorities in Florida's Lee County—which surrounds Fort Myers—have seen a surge in potentially life-threatening <i>Vibrio vulnificus</i> infections. The bacteria are known to lurk in warm coastal waters, but fester amid pollution, particularly sewage spills.</p> <p>This year, Lee County <a href="#">tallied 29 infections</a>—27 identified in the aftermath of the hurricane—as well as four deaths. For comparison, Lee County recorded just five cases and one death in 2021, and zero cases in 2020. Florida overall has recorded 65 cases and 11 deaths in 2022, including those from Lee County. The state total is nearly double the totals from the past two years.</p> <p>"The Florida Department of Health in Lee County is observing an abnormal increase in cases of <i>Vibrio vulnificus</i> infections as a result of exposure to the floodwaters and standing waters following Hurricane Ian," a Lee County health department spokesperson told CBS News on Monday. The spokesperson went on to warn that "sewage spills, like those caused from Hurricane Ian, may increase bacteria levels," and residents should "always be aware of the potential risks associated when exposing open wounds, cuts, or scratches on the skin to warm, brackish, or salt water."</p>

	<p>The good news is that the infection is not known to pass from person to person. But, those who are exposed to floodwaters risk infection through any wound or broken skin. People can also be sickened by eating raw or undercooked seafood harvested from bacteria-tainted waters.</p> <p>In infected wounds, symptoms begin with redness, swelling, and pain that can quickly progress to a full-body infection, leading to gruesome blood-tinged skin lesions (called hemorrhagic bullae) and septic shock.</p> <p>According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <i>V. vulnificus</i> infections are fatal in about 40 percent of overall cases, though wound infections have a lower fatality rate of about 20 percent. Aggressive surgical treatments, including amputation, to remove infected, rotting tissue can prevent death. Those most at risk are people with compromised immune systems, and for foodborne infections, those with chronic liver disease. Besides surgery for tissue infections, treatment includes combinations of antibiotics.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Ukraine: 30% power plants destroyed</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/18/ukraine-says-30-of-its-power-plants-destroyed-in-last-eight-days">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/18/ukraine-says-30-of-its-power-plants-destroyed-in-last-eight-days</a>
GIST	<p>Nearly a third of Ukraine's power stations have been destroyed by Russian attacks since Monday last week – prompting Nato's secretary general to announce that new counter-drone defences would be delivered within days.</p> <p>Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, accused Russia of engaging in "terrorist attacks" with its missiles and Iranian-made drones, while British ministers attended emergency meetings in Washington on how to counteract them.</p> <p>Zelenskiy tweeted: "Since Oct 10, 30% of Ukraine's power stations have been destroyed, causing massive blackouts across the country." Attacks on civilian infrastructure meant there was "no space left for negotiations with Putin's regime".</p> <p>The bombing is often inaccurate and civilians have been killed in residential buildings in Kyiv and other big cities. But enough have got through to cause problems for a power grid already short of generation after the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant was shut down.</p> <p>Kyrylo Tymoshenko, the deputy head of the presidential office, said energy infrastructure and power supply were targeted overnight in an eastern district of Kyiv, where two people were killed, and in the cities of Dnipro and Zhytomyr.</p> <p>"The situation is critical now across the country because our regions are dependent on one another ... it's necessary for the whole country to prepare for electricity, water and heating outages," Tymoshenko told Ukrainian television.</p> <p>Jens Stoltenberg, Nato's secretary general, said member countries would "step up" and deliver more air defences to help stabilise the situation. "Nato will in the coming days deliver counter-drone systems to counter the specific threat of drones, including those from Iran," he said.</p> <p>Russia has been targeting Ukraine with a mixture of missiles and, more recently, Iranian-made Shahed-136 drones, rebranded as Geran-2 by the attackers.</p> <p>Although there are signs that Moscow is running short on guided missiles, it has acquired up to 2,400 of the drones, according to Ukraine, and is using them as cheaper substitutes to hit the energy targets and strike fear into civilians.</p>

Iran denies supplying the drones to Russia, while the Kremlin spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, said he did not have any information about their origin. “Russian equipment with Russian names is being used,” Peskov said.

Ukraine, experts and western governments believe the Gerans are rebranded Shahed drones, identifiable by their distinctive delta wing shape and from an examination of fragments recovered from the ground.

A western official, speaking on condition of anonymity in a briefing on Tuesday, said they believed Russia was “pursuing a deliberate strategy of attempting to destroy Ukraine’s electricity network”. It was “not in doubt”, the official said, “where these weapons were coming from”.

Ukraine’s foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, said he would ask Zelenskiy to cut diplomatic ties with Tehran – while presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak asked what Iran had got in return from Russia, speculating that it could be uranium, “nuclear technologies”, or some other guarantee.

Reuters reported that Iran had promised to provide Russia with surface-to-surface missiles, in addition to more drones, citing two senior Iranian officials and two Iranian diplomats.

Germany said that Iran should be punished with “further sanctions” after the recent spate of drone attacks. Its ambassador to the UK, Miguel Berger, said Tehran had helped Russia “terrorise civilians in Ukraine with their kamikaze drones” and there were “worrying reports” that Iran might sell missiles to Moscow.

The UK defence secretary, Ben Wallace, and the foreign secretary, James Cleverly, flew to Washington on Tuesday to discuss how to respond to Iran’s intervention, as officials briefed that a new air defence package for Ukraine was being prepared.

A western official said a lot of colleagues within the western alliance were “looking at what the right package might be to support the Ukrainians”.

Last week Germany delivered the first of four Iris-T air defence systems it had promised to supply Ukraine, but the US has been wary of strengthening Ukraine’s air force and defences for fear it would be seen as an escalation.

Two “objects of critical infrastructure” were damaged in Kyiv on Tuesday, said the city’s mayor, Vitali Klitschko, and electricity and water supply in “many houses” in east Kyiv was “partially limited”.

The mayor appealed to residents to conserve electricity by turning off air conditioners, electric kettles and microwaves, and said houses experiencing reduced water pressure should use water as “economically as possible”.

All of Zhytomyr was without electricity and water after a double missile strike on an energy facility, said the mayor, Serhiy Sukhomlyn. Hospitals were running on backup power, he said.

Russia said on Tuesday that its forces were maintaining strikes against military and energy infrastructure targets, and that it had used what it described as high-precision, long-range air- and sea-based weapons.

The targets were “military command and energy infrastructure of Ukraine, as well as arsenals with ammunition and foreign-made weapons”, it said. “All assigned objects were hit,” it added.

Klitschko said a fifth person, an elderly woman, had been found dead after a wave of drone attacks in the centre of Kyiv on Monday morning. She died after a residential building was hit by a drone.

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HEADLINE	10/19 Ukraine’s coming winter looks colder
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/19/ukraines-coming-winter-looks-colder-after-russia-targets-energy-supply">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/19/ukraines-coming-winter-looks-colder-after-russia-targets-energy-supply</a>
GIST	<p>It is a grim warning. While attention has been focused on the civilian casualties and chaos caused by Russia's renewed bombing of Kyiv and other major cities, its impact on the country's energy supply has not been quantified until today.</p> <p>President <a href="#">Volodymyr Zelenskiy</a> announced that 30% of the country's power stations had been knocked out in just eight days, an astonishing proportion in a short amount of time with blackouts occurring in the east of the capital.</p> <p>At one point <a href="#">Ukraine</a>, connected to the European grid, was an energy exporter, partly because of its large nuclear power stations. But with the Zaporizhzhia plant, seized by the Russians, already shut down, the surplus, the president acknowledged earlier this month, had gone.</p> <p>Now, Ukrainians need to prepare for "rolling blackouts" and people will have to conserve energy, the deputy head of the president's office, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, <a href="#">warned on national television</a> on Thursday. The country needed, he added, to be prepared for "a hard winter".</p> <p>Politicians in Ukraine have been warning for months now that Russia would target the energy grid in the run up to winter, where temperatures can drop to -10C and even -20C. In some frontline areas, such as Donbas, there are already no gas supplies for heating the apartment blocks where so many live.</p> <p>Quietly around the country there have been efforts to ensure hospitals and military sites have backup generators available. But it will not be enough for civilians and it is clear that the situation – and the bleak initial effectiveness of the Russian strategy – could make for a very difficult period.</p> <p>Some experts have feared there could even be a renewed migration crisis, as people seek to leave the country in pursuit of warmth. One international aid agency, which did not want to be named, estimated there could be as many as 2m people will want to leave on top of the 7.7m who have already done so.</p> <p>On Tuesday, Ukraine indicated that it believed that Russia's new strategy was linked to an offer of peace talks by Vladimir Putin at the end of September, although that offer is seen by Kyiv as an attempt to stall the fighting to allow Russia to regroup and stabilise the frontlines until its fresh wave of conscripts arrive.</p> <p>Against such concerns, it is no wonder that Britain's foreign and defence secretaries, James Cleverly and Ben Wallace, flew to Washington to discuss, among other things, a new military aid package to Ukraine, focusing on improving air defences. Jens Stoltenberg, Nato's general secretary, said that help could come within days.</p> <p>Although the Iranian-made Shahed-136 drones are felt to have limited use on the battlefield, and around three-quarters are being shot down, clearly enough are getting through to affect power generation. Without an urgent supply of new weapons to tackle them, problems could worsen fast.</p> <p>However, ensuring the continuity of supply of electricity and warmth to the military has been a priority for Kyiv, while any frontline difficulties the Ukrainians face are likely to be shared by the Russian invaders too.</p> <p>That means it is civilians – and civilian morale – that will bear the brunt, a familiar Russian strategy to prioritise psychological effects over battlefield success – although it will almost certainly take a lot more than a cold, dark winter to dampen the broad Ukrainian desire to fight against the Russian invaders.</p> <p>But a Russian attempt to stoke a humanitarian crisis in the winter will also impose further costs on both Ukraine and its western supporters. The rapid success of the attacks on power stations suggest the coming months will be hard, unless an urgent military solution can be found.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/19 Day 238 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/19/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-238-of-the-invasion">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/19/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-238-of-the-invasion</a>
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The new commander of Moscow's army in Ukraine announced that civilians were being "resettled" from the Russian-occupied southern city of Kherson, describing the military situation as "tense".</b> "The enemy continually attempts to attack the positions of Russian troops," Sergei Surovikin <a href="#">said in his first televised interview</a> since being appointed earlier this month, adding that the situation was particularly difficult around the occupied southern city of Kherson.</li> <li>• <b>Kyiv has recently introduced a news blackout in the south of the country, leading to speculations that it was preparing a new major offensive on Kherson.</b> "When the Ukrainians have a news blackout it means something is going on. They have always done this before when there is a big offensive push on," Michael Clarke, a former director general of the Royal United Services Institute, told Sky News.</li> <li>• <b>People in four towns in the Kherson region were being moved in anticipation of a "large-scale offensive",</b> the Russian-installed head of Kherson, Vladimir Saldo, said in a video address. Kirill Stremousov, the Russian-installed deputy administrator of the Kherson region, echoed the message on Telegram late on Tuesday: "The battle for Kherson will begin in the very near future. The civilian population is advised, if possible, to leave the area of the upcoming fierce hostilities."</li> <li>• <b>Russia's foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, said on Thursday that Russia no longer sees a need to maintain a diplomatic presence in the west,</b> the Daily Beast reports. "There is neither point nor desire to maintain the previous presence in western states. Our people work there in conditions that can hardly be called human," Lavrov said, according to the Russian news agency Tass.</li> <li>• <b>Military advisers from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps were on Ukrainian soil at a Russian military base in occupied Crimea,</b> the New York Times reports. The Iranians were reported to have been deployed to help Russian troops deal with problems with the Tehran-supplied fleet of Shahed-136 drones, rebranded as Geran-2 by the attackers.</li> <li>• <b>Iran has deepened its commitment to supplying arms for Russia's assault on Ukraine by agreeing to provide a batch of medium-range missiles,</b> as well as large numbers of cheap but effective drones, <a href="#">according to US and Iranian security officials</a>.</li> <li>• <b>Russian airstrikes have destroyed 30% of Ukraine's power stations since 10 October,</b> causing massive blackouts across the country, said Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy.</li> <li>• <b>Russian strikes hit a power plant in Kyiv, killing three people, as well as energy infrastructure in Kharkiv in the east and Dnipro in the south.</b> A man sheltering in an apartment building in the southern port city Mykolaiv was also killed and the northern Ukrainian city of Zhytomyr was without water or electricity.</li> <li>• <b>Ukraine's foreign minister said he was proposing a formal cut in diplomatic ties with Tehran</b> after a wave of Russian attacks using what Kyiv says are Iranian-made drones. Iran has denied supplying drones and Russia has denied using them. Ukrainian intelligence said 1,750 drones, each costing only £20,000 to manufacture, have been delivered. They can be fired from mobile trucks and, despite their slow speeds, are hard to detect until the last minute.</li> <li>• <b>Nato said Ukraine would receive anti-drone defence systems in coming days.</b> Jens Stoltenberg, Nato's secretary general, said member countries would "step up" and deliver more air defences to help stabilise the situation.</li> <li>• <b>Russia's Duma has indefinitely stopped broadcasting live plenary sessions to protect information from "our enemy",</b> a leading lawmaker said.</li> <li>• <b>Joe Biden is expected to announce Wednesday that he is releasing more oil from the US strategic reserve</b> as part of a response to recent production cuts announced by nations in OPEC+.</li> <li>• <b>Zelenskiy urged his troops to take more prisoners,</b> saying this would make it easier to secure the release of soldiers being held by Russia.</li> <li>• <b>The west should listen carefully when President Vladimir Putin talks about using nuclear weapons but should remember that it is more useful for him to threaten their use than to go ahead,</b> the head of Norway's armed forces told Reuters.</li> <li>• <b>Ukraine's state nuclear energy company accused Russia of "kidnapping" two senior staff at the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant</b> in southern Ukraine. Energoatom said Russian forces on Monday "kidnapped" the head of information technology, Oleg Kostyukov, and the plant's assistant general director, Oleg Osheka, and "took them to an unknown destination".</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Kevin McCarthy, the Republican leader in the US House of Representatives, warned on Tuesday that Congress would not “write a blank cheque to Ukraine”</b> if his party wins next month’s midterm elections. Hours later, however, another senior Republican, Michael McCaul, said that he thought the Ukrainians should “get what they need” – including longer-range missiles than those the Biden administration has so far been prepared to supply.</li> </ul>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Iran to supply missiles, drones to Russia</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/18/iran-agrees-to-supply-missiles-as-well-as-drones-to-russia">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/18/iran-agrees-to-supply-missiles-as-well-as-drones-to-russia</a>
GIST	<p>Iran has deepened its commitment to supplying arms for Russia’s assault on Ukraine by agreeing to provide a batch of medium-range missiles, as well as large numbers of cheap but effective drones, according to US and Iranian security officials.</p> <p>The surface-to-surface missiles are designed to supplement the severely run-down stock of Russian missiles, as part of a bid to systematically destroy Ukraine’s electricity infrastructure ahead of a brutal winter.</p> <p>The UK defence secretary, Ben Wallace, flew to Washington at short notice to discuss the dangerous new phase in the war, share intelligence on Iran’s involvement and discuss what package of new air defence can be provided to Ukraine to help the nation stave off the attacks.</p> <p>The Iranian sale of missiles to Russia took place following a series of meetings including one in Moscow on 18 September and another on 6 October when Iran’s first vice-president, Mohammad Mokhber, two senior officials from Iran’s powerful Revolutionary Guards and an official from the Supreme National Security Council visited Moscow.</p> <p>Reuters cited an Iranian official briefed on the October trip saying: “The Russians had asked for more drones and those Iranian ballistic missiles with improved accuracy, particularly the Fateh and Zolfaghar missiles family.”</p> <p>The two short-range missiles are capable of striking targets at distances of 300km (185 miles) and 700km (435 miles) respectively.</p> <p>Iran on Tuesday repeated its denial of selling drones to Russia, and called for talks with Ukraine to “resolve” the accusations. But Tehran at the same time asserts it is fully entitled to sell arms abroad since the restrictions on arms sales contained in the 2015 Iran nuclear deal expired in 2020. The US, France and the UK say missile sales would be in breach of the nuclear deal.</p> <p>Ukraine’s foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, said on Tuesday that he had advised that his nation break off all diplomatic ties with Iran, saying Ukraine would not tolerate Iran’s “meanness and lies” on the issue.</p> <p>The White House has straightforwardly accused Iran of lying about the drone sales, but has been more circumspect about the missile sales. Western officials say hundreds of drones have been supplied, and were in the short term being used to destroy Ukraine’s electricity infrastructure.</p> <p>Ukrainian intelligence said 1,750 drones, each costing only £20,000 to manufacture, have been delivered. They can be fired from mobile trucks and, despite their slow speeds, are hard to detect until the last minute.</p> <p>The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, last week said Russia is seeking to acquire 2,400 drones from Iran.</p> <p>The deepening of the Iranian-Russian alliance was first signalled in June when Vladimir Putin visited the new Iranian president, Ebrahim Raisi, in Tehran. They met again on 16 September at the Shanghai</p>

Cooperation Organisation, where they revealed they were finalising a new treaty covering trade and security.

Any western determination that Iran is supplying medium-range missiles is a high risk move by Iran, since western officials are already starting to come under severe political pressure to end talks with Iran over the 2015 nuclear deal due to the repression of street protests by women and students.

The Iranian talks are effectively suspended until after the US midterm elections, but even after those Joe Biden will find it impossible to gather support for a renewed deal if Iranian supplied rockets are pounding Ukrainian cities.

The west has worked on the assumption that Iran wants to keep those talks alive and bring about a lifting of crippling western sanctions, but many around the current Iranian leadership want to abandon any pretence of improving relations with the west and instead form a long-term strategic alliance with Russia and China.

The GPS-guided Iranian Shahed 136 drones can fly up to 1,500 miles launched from trucks outside Ukraine. Through their low cost and sheer numbers, they have become a major and expensive preoccupation for Ukrainian air defence, pulling some of its systems back from the eastern front lines.

They can be combated by small arms, Stinger missiles, GPS jammers, anti-aircraft artillery and the German supplied IRIS-T air defence systems. A western official said there are a lot of colleagues “looking at what the right package might be to support the Ukrainian air defences”.

“Given the size of the nation of Ukraine and the infrastructure and military operation that you want to protect, there is not enough air defence in the world to create a shield to prevent Russian missiles and drones coming into the territory,” said former US general Mark Hertling.

“The drones have a negligible radar signal, so you do not know they are there until that lawnmower is buzzing around 1,000ft overhead. They are coming from all kinds of directions.

“They do fly quite slowly, though, so they are much more susceptible to being shot down by small arms and other systems. The tactics have been using them en masse in the hope some get through.”

The UK raised the issue of the Iranian drones in a meeting with Iranian diplomats on 3 October and UK officials said they are looking at a range of robust responses, which are likely to include a new UN security council resolution and further sanctions.

A formal suspension of the Iran nuclear deal talks is likely to be one of the points of discussion between US officials, and Wallace and UK foreign secretary James Cleverly.

Western officials have predicted the nature of the war will change radically by mid-November when the rains will make most ground manoeuvres impossible.

But they are expecting to see further progress in the south around the city of Kherson before that deadline, given the signs that Russia is starting a partial withdrawal of civilians from the city.

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HEADLINE	10/18 NGOs warn Haiti on verge of collapse
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/18/haiti-un-talks-gangs-hunger-cholera">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/18/haiti-un-talks-gangs-hunger-cholera</a>
GIST	NGOs operating in <a href="#">Haiti</a> warn that the chaos engulfing the country has become so total and the social fabric so torn that the country is on the verge of collapse, as discussions continue at the UN security council on how to restore order.

Haitians are currently facing a series of overlapping crises that are becoming deadlier by the day as heavily armed gangs continue to blockade the country's principal port and fuel terminal.

The country [is also experiencing](#) its worst hunger in history as a deadly outbreak of cholera spreads and armed gangs increasingly targeting women and children with sexual violence as a form of warfare.

"In 20 years of working in Haiti, we have never seen something like this," said Fiammetta Cappellini, country representative for the Avsi Foundation. "Violence is everywhere and touches everybody. The most vulnerable people are literally struggling to survive as humanitarian aid is failing to reach people."

On Monday, the US and Mexico called for the formation of a non-UN multinational force to take down the gangs who now dominate much of Port-au-Prince.

Violence has mounted following [the assassination of president Jovenel Moïse in July 2021](#) when the gangs – many of which have links to establishment politicians – exploited a power vacuum to seize more ground.

Now the factions dominating most of Port-au-Prince are using ever more brutal tactics to terrorise the population into submission, the UN's human rights office said [on Friday](#).

Gang rape of elderly women and girls as young as 10 years old has become a tool "to instil fear, punish, subjugate and inflict pain on local populations," the UN concluded in its [new report](#).

Among the tens of "gruesome testimonies" collected by the UN there were cases of children being raped for hours in front of their parents and in some cases by more than half a dozen armed men.

"Alarming the number of cases increases by the day as the humanitarian and human rights crisis in Haiti deepens," said Nada Al-Nashif, the acting human rights chief.

Sexual violence is also being used against kidnap victims, the UN said. The organisation documented cases of gangs repeatedly raping women and girls for days or weeks while in captivity. In some cases the gangs send video recordings of the attacks to victims' families to pressure them into paying for their release.

If not halted imminently the sexual violence will make any chance of reconciliation and peace-building in the country more challenging, the UN said.

"Such rampant use of sexual violence risks further shattering the already deeply fragile social fabric of Haitian society for years to come and may undermine prospects of sustainable development and lasting stability," the report said.

Already dire hunger levels are also reaching unprecedented, "catastrophic" levels, the World Food Programme (WFP) warned on Friday.

A record 4.7 million people are facing acute hunger, with 1.8 million now at an emergency level of malnutrition.

For the first time thousands of Haitian are suffering level 5 hunger – the WFP's highest alert level and one often reserved for wartime famine.

Malnutrition has long been rife in Port-au-Prince's slums, but the paralysis of the country by gangs has caused hunger to reach life-or-death levels.

Many residents are unable to work due to severe petrol shortages and food prices are soaring, leaving 65% of Cite Soleil's inhabitants regularly hungry and 5% of them needing urgent humanitarian assistance, the WFP says.

	<p>As cupboards go bare and water taps run dry, cholera disease has also returned to Haiti with cruel timing.</p> <p>The bacterial disease can be deadly – particularly for the malnourished – and is probably spreading through Port-au-Prince’s shanty towns with ease, say medical NGOs, as there is little running water for sanitation.</p> <p>Port-au-Prince’s national penitentiary has become a centre of the outbreak, with 14 deaths recorded in the overcrowded prison.</p> <p>Haitian health authorities had recorded 425 suspected cases and 22 deaths as of 14 October.</p> <p>Haiti’s last cholera outbreak began in 2010 and went on to kill 10,000 in the nine years it took to stamp out.</p> <p>NGOs fear that history will repeat itself if an urgent solution is not found to pacify the violence and end food and water shortages.</p> <p>“Haitian people can’t wait any longer,” said Judes Jonathas, who manages NGO Mercy Corps’ Haiti programme. “We cannot descend even further into this abyss. The urgency is now, to save what can be saved.”</p> <p>As the number of victims of disease, malnutrition and gunshot wounds climbs, access to healthcare is shrinking as many hospitals remain closed due to national fuel shortages.</p> <p>“The population is in an unprecedented and dramatic situation. Now it is really a matter of life or death on a daily basis,” Capellini said.</p> <p>“The progressive destruction” of Haiti and its institutions will make any program to stabilise then rebuild it from a failed state into a functioning democracy a long and arduous one, said Jonathas.</p> <p>“There is an absence of a clear policy and of governance at all levels, with all the structures needed to respond to the country’s problems having been weakened,” he said.</p> <p>Any international solution must also include Haitians if it is to be a lasting one, he added. UN missions in Haiti have quelled violence in the past, but it swiftly returned once they departed.</p> <p>“Solutions must be local, among Haitians, but of course with the involvement of our international partners. If we talk about solutions and forget once again the important Haitian actors, it will be a short-term solution to return with the same problems a few years later.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 US \$2M emergency relief funding to Cuba</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/18/us-cuba-emergency-relief-funding-hurricane-ian-victims">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/oct/18/us-cuba-emergency-relief-funding-hurricane-ian-victims</a>
GIST	<p>The US will provide \$2m in emergency relief funding for victims of <a href="#">Hurricane Ian</a> in <a href="#">Cuba</a>, in response to a call for help from the government in Havana, marking a rare example of cooperation between the two countries in recent years.</p> <p>Ned Price, the state department spokesman, made it clear that the relief assistance would not go through the Cuban government but Washington would instead work with independent organizations like the Red Cross and Red Crescent.</p> <p>“We stand with the Cuban people as they work to recover from this disaster,” Price said.</p> <p>The Cuban request for assistance and the positive US response marks a breakthrough in relations between Washington and Havana since the low point of the Trump administration.</p>

	<p>In the past, when the US has offered humanitarian aid after a bad hurricane, Cuba has turned it down, but the government can no longer rely on Russia to contribute in Washington's place – another sign of the negative impact the invasion of Ukraine has had on Russian influence around the world.</p> <p>Hurricane Ian struck <a href="#">Cuba's Pinar del Río province</a> on the west side of the island, killing at least two people and flooding the tobacco fields, but it also smashed parts of the electricity grid, causing nationwide blackouts. Persistent power cuts have triggered <a href="#">scattered protests</a> in the aftermath of the hurricane.</p> <p>Much of the US aid is expected to go to humanitarian infrastructure such as hospitals and water pumping systems.</p> <p>Donald Trump reversed a significant improvement in US-Cuban relations achieved under the Obama administration and, in the last days of his presidency, declared Havana to be a <a href="#">state sponsor of terrorism</a>.</p> <p>Joe Biden has signalled incremental steps to ease the sanctions imposed by Trump, saying his administration would remove the cap on dollar remittances Americans are allowed to send to Cuba and reopen limited air travel to the island, but he has sanctions introduced by his predecessor in place and not removed Havana from the terrorism watch list.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 China economic picture grows murkier</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/business/economy/china-economy-gdp.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/business/economy/china-economy-gdp.html</a>
GIST	<p>For the past quarter-century, China was run by a well-oiled government bureaucracy that predictably focused on the economy as its top priority.</p> <p>That may no longer be the case.</p> <p>Xi Jinping, China's top leader, made clear on Sunday at the opening of the Communist Party's national congress, a twice-a-decade gathering of the country's ruling elite, that politics and national security were paramount. That point was reinforced the next day when Beijing made the unusual move of delaying what should have been a routine, closely stage-managed release of data on how the economy fared in the past three months.</p> <p>"It does show the primacy of politics in influencing the very competent, institutional technocracy that China has," said Victor Shih, a specialist in Chinese elite politics and finance at the University of California, San Diego.</p> <p>"The very likely reason the numbers were delayed was the State Council leaders were afraid the numbers would detract from the triumphant tone of the party congress," he added. The State Council is China's cabinet.</p> <p>It is extremely rare for any large economy to delay the release of such an important economic report. The data included not just China's economic growth from July through September but also the country's factory production, retail sales, fixed-asset investment and property prices for September.</p> <p>Mr. Xi, who is expected to claim a third term in power, has sought to project confidence in China's outlook. On Monday, a Chinese economic planning official reiterated the Communist Party's talking points about how well China's economy was faring, saying it improved in the last quarter.</p> <p>But that optimistic message was quickly undercut by news of the delayed release of gross domestic product data, and how the delay was handled. Reporters who called government employees on Friday and Monday about the release were told they had no information.</p>



Contacted again late Monday afternoon, the workers said only that the release had been postponed indefinitely. The National Bureau of Statistics still has not explained the delay or announced a rescheduled date. On Friday, the government also failed to release data on exports and imports for September, and has not said when it would do so.

China's refusal to provide statistics, combined with the haphazard way the postponements were communicated, suggested either that part of the bureaucracy was in disarray or that China's economy was in worse shape than most people had realized. It also raised questions about the reliability of the data.

"It's a horrible blunder," said Taisu Zhang, a Yale University law professor who specializes in comparative legal and economic history. "I don't know if they are massaging the numbers — even if they need to massage the figures, the better thing to do would be to massage them within the usual time frame."

Beijing set a target in March that growth would be "about 5.5 percent" this year. Yet Western economists have estimated that China's economy grew only a little more than 3 percent in the third quarter.

That still would have been better than growth of 0.4 percent logged in the second quarter, when Shanghai was locked down for two months to stamp out a Covid-19 outbreak.

Mr. Xi has put a premium on social stability and national security, often with actions that have had a side effect of slowing economic growth and employment. Regulators have clamped down on the tech sector, contributing to widespread layoffs among young employees. Dozens of the country's private property developers have defaulted on debts this year after Beijing discouraged real estate speculation.

Tycoons [have been fleeing the country](#). Municipal lockdowns to stop outbreaks of Covid-19 have taken a heavy toll.

Questions have long been raised about whether China's economic growth statistics may be inflated somewhat or smoothed from one year to the next. But until recently China had also released more granular data that made it possible to draw conclusions about the economy's overall health.

One such measure is the rising value of new office complexes, rail lines and other investment projects. But last year, China stopped releasing data on inflation in construction costs.

That has made it hard to calculate the true value of the new investments, said Diana Choyleva, chief economist at Enodo Economics, a London consulting firm. So while the total money invested is still available, it is no longer clear what that money is buying.

Underlying data had been available for China's international trade, its main engine of growth. But growing inconsistencies started to become apparent over the summer.

China's General Administration of Customs reported sharp increases through August in exports to the United States and Europe. But the number of containers leaving Chinese ports for these destinations was flat.

Average prices charged by factories in China to wholesalers have been little changed. Few economists think that China is earning more money from exports through inflation. The plateau in containers even as export statistics are rising is consistent with previous periods of economic weakness in China, as exporters exaggerate the value of their shipments to customs officials as part of complex strategies to move money out of China.

There are other signs that actual exports of goods are now in trouble. Taiwan has very similar trade patterns to mainland China, and on Oct. 7, Taiwan reported a sharp, unexpected drop in its imports and exports during September.

The cost of shipping each container from China to the United States or Europe has also fallen steeply over the past year. It dropped much further in September. The cost of loading a container onto a ship in eastern

	<p>China for delivery to Los Angeles has plunged by more than half this year, according to Container xChange, an online container logistics platform. This suggests few factories are bidding for space aboard ships.</p> <p>“The retailers and the bigger buyers or shippers are more cautious about the outlook on demand and are ordering less,” said Christian Roeloffs, the chief executive and co-founder of Container xChange.</p> <p>Another problem is that even when China releases data, it sometimes provides less explanation now of how the data is calculated. Derek Scissors, a senior fellow specializing in China and India at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, said he used to be able to get answers from Chinese officials on how certain investment statistics were calculated. But in the past couple of years, they are no longer willing to discuss their data.</p> <p>Monday’s postponement of the release of economic data had little discernible effect on Chinese financial markets on Tuesday. Share prices rose sharply in Hong Kong as a change in British tax policy preceded a global rally in stock markets. The Shanghai and Shenzhen stock markets, more insulated from international events and also heavily managed by the Chinese authorities, were little changed.</p> <p>But delays can have a corrosive effect on China’s image in financial markets.</p> <p>“If delays start to become a regular occurrence,” said Julian Evans-Pritchard, the senior China economist at Capital Economics, “then that could reduce confidence in the official economic data and the professionalism of China’s bureaucracy.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Pressure: strikes spread in France</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/world/europe/strikes-france-macron.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/world/europe/strikes-france-macron.html</a>
GIST	<p>PARIS — It started several weeks ago at refineries. Then it spread to nuclear plants. And finally, on Tuesday, railway and postal workers, nurses, some teachers and even high school students across France, at least for the day, joined a snowballing strike that has become the biggest test so far of President Emmanuel Macron’s second term.</p> <p>The widening strike came on the heels of a <a href="#">large march against rising costs of living</a> held in Paris on Sunday, and it increases pressure on Mr. Macron’s government, which is already embattled in Parliament, where opposition parties are refusing to pass the budget.</p> <p>Mr. Macron is now struggling to mollify anger on three different fronts — in factories, on the streets and in Parliament — before it coalesces into major social unrest. That could threaten his agenda, including plans for a contentious pensions overhaul, <a href="#">as he seeks a direction for his new term</a>.</p> <p>“It’s been five years that we’ve faced cuts to our social welfare system,” Annie Dally, a 55-year-old elementary schoolteacher, said in the middle of a boisterous, colorful union march that stretched for miles, snaking its way through Paris’ Left Bank on Tuesday.</p> <p>Pointing out groups of protesting students, immigrant groups, gay teachers, retired seniors and workers from various unions, Ms. Dally, wearing stickers asking for wage increases and early retirement, said: “We’re all in the same struggle.”</p> <p>The original <a href="#">strikes at refineries</a> across the country have left about a quarter of the pumps across the country fully or partly dry. While Mr. Macron promised the situation would return to normal this week, with his government issuing back-to-work orders and pushing the unions and gas companies to negotiate, lines at gas stations around Paris continued on Tuesday, adding to the frustration among drivers and other commuters.</p>

Hotel owners complained of canceled reservations and worried, should the strike continue much longer, they would lose more bookings during the two-week All Saints' holiday, which begins this weekend.

The oil workers' [original call for wage increases](#) to keep up with rising inflation has captured underlying concerns about the country's economic inequalities and mounting bills for working families.

Mr. Macron's government has spent nearly 100 billion euros (\$98 billion) since November to subsidize energy bills for households and businesses, but inflation has pushed up the costs of many basics in French supermarkets, from frozen meat to tissues.

Government officials have also been issuing conflicting messages about the strikes. While Prime Minister Élisabeth Borne [told Parliament](#) on Tuesday that "it is unacceptable that a minority continues to block the country," the interior minister, Gérald Darmanin, [acknowledged](#) the same day "a problem of salaries" in France and called for wage increases.

The Confédération Générale du Travail, France's second-largest union, which has been leading the strikes, [said](#) more than 150 demonstrations were held across France on Tuesday. Many left-wing politicians, wearing their red-white-and blue sashes, joined in, looking to harness the social unrest to increase pressure on the government.

"A strike, a march, a protest," Alma Dufour, a lawmaker from the hard-left party France Unbowed, said as she marched among protesters in Paris. "We need to keep the dynamic going."

Ms. Dufour, who represents an area in Normandy, where several refineries have been hit by strikes, said her party was considering contributing to strike pay and organizing another march to keep the momentum going.

While left-wing politicians and striking union leaders called for mass mobilization and said rising anger in the country reflected an "autumn of discontent," Tuesday's strike was less disruptive to the capital than had been feared.

Many bus and train trips were canceled, but the scene at the busy Saint-Lazare train station in Paris felt no more hectic than usual. If anything, the railway staff on hand to answer questions outnumbered commuters.

Bruno Verlay left his home three hours earlier than usual to make sure he was on time for his job as a security guard in the city's financial district. But in the end, he found the trip smooth.

"I am so used to strikes," said Mr. Verlay, 58, "I'm immune."

Many high school students joined the protests, with students at the Hélène Boucher high school, in the east of the capital, barricading themselves behind large green garbage cans and holding signs denouncing recent changes in education policy, warning that students' lives had become more precarious, or protesting police violence.

"More teachers, less cops!" they chanted Tuesday morning.

Tuesday's strikes coincided with efforts this week by Mr. Macron's government to get its budget through Parliament. The last legislative elections in June left [Mr. Macron short of an absolute majority in the National Assembly](#), the lower and more powerful house of Parliament.

Legislators are threatening to vote down the spending bill. So Mr. Macron's government is likely to use special constitutional powers to push it through without a vote. Olivier Véran, the government's spokesman, [said it would "probably" do so](#) on Wednesday.

Étienne Ollion, a sociologist at the Polytechnique engineering school who specializes in French parliamentary life, said the mechanism, allowed under France's 1958 Constitution, was "a bit of an authoritarian measure." Though the mechanism had been used 60 times since its introduction, he said, Mr. Macron's lack of a parliamentary majority and the current climate of social unrest could make it a more delicate move.

"It could have an effect on the mobilizations," Mr. Ollion said, referring to the strikes and protests, adding that protesters might see use of the budget mechanism as "an attempt to avoid confronting the reality of the situation."

Using such constitutional powers would also let members of the opposition put forward no-confidence motions, which leftist and far-right groups in Parliament have already promised to do.

But Mr. Ollion said the risk of a government collapse "is relatively limited," because the main center-right opposition seems reluctant to join in and because the left and far right appear unwilling to back one another's no-confidence motion.

The unions are also treading a fine line in their confrontation with the government. Polls suggest support for the strikes is declining, with an increasing number of French around the country frustrated by their consequences, particularly drivers and people in the hospitality business.

Laurent Duc's hotel in Lyon was down to a miserable 20 percent occupancy on Tuesday because of last-minute cancellations, with people worrying they wouldn't be able to fill up their tanks or get there by train, he said.

"We suffered so much in our industry over the past two years — we were forced to close," said Mr. Duc, who represents the nation's largest hospitality association, including owners of hotels, restaurants, bars and cafes across the country.

"These people got all their wages," he said of the refinery workers. "I don't know how I will pay my staff."

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HEADLINE	10/19 Inside the wait for refugee status
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/us/politics/refugees-asylum-immigration.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/us/politics/refugees-asylum-immigration.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — For the past eight years, Ahmed Mohamed Aden has been trying to reunite with the sons he left behind when he fled Somalia.</p> <p>He sought help from immigration advocates in Wisconsin, where he was legally resettled. He filed reams of paperwork with the United Nations refugee agency. He submitted DNA samples to prove he shares a genetic relationship with his children, which he hoped would speed up processing.</p> <p>But earlier this month, he learned that their applications were still pending, stuck in a backlog of people fleeing violence and persecution who hope to find sanctuary in America.</p> <p>"I did everything I can," an emotional Mr. Aden said, holding his head in his hands as the social worker assigned to his case explained that his children would not be joining him in Milwaukee any time soon. "I tried."</p> <p>Mr. Aden's sons are among thousands of people living in limbo as delays in the U.S. refugee system stretch to an average of five years or more, according to government estimates.</p> <p>The average wait used to be roughly two years, before the Trump administration gutted the refugee program with the intention of sealing off the United States from refugees and other immigrants. And the coronavirus pandemic forced many U.S. embassies to close or curtail their operations, allowing cases to back up even more.</p>

Many of the people who have been in the pipeline for years have grown increasingly frustrated, saying they are being pushed to the back of the line as the Biden administration prioritizes those fleeing crises in Ukraine and Afghanistan.

Krish O'Mara Vignarajah, the chief executive of Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, said she understands that the Biden administration is working with an overburdened system inherited from the Trump years.

But, she said, her patience is wearing thin.

"We're at a point in the administration that while we recognize how the Trump administration decimated the infrastructure, it can't be an excuse for too much longer," Ms. Vignarajah said. "Because lives depend on the administration stepping up."

President Biden, who has promised to rebuild the refugee program, issued an executive order last year that directed his administration to cut the processing times to six months.

But in a [report](#) submitted to Congress last month, the White House acknowledged that the effort to provide temporary protection to roughly 180,000 people escaping Ukraine and Afghanistan "required a significant reallocation of time and resources" and "hampered the program's rebound." Last week, the administration said it would offer a similar status for up to 24,000 [Venezuelans looking to escape their broken country](#), even as many more who cross the border would be expelled under a pandemic-era rule put in place by Mr. Trump.

The shift means people in desperate conditions in countries like Somalia, Eritrea and Myanmar are facing the prospect of even longer waits. More than 76,000 prospective refugees were in the system's pipeline waiting to be cleared for travel as of this summer, according to State Department data obtained by The New York Times.

Mulugeta Gebresilasie, a case manager at a resettlement agency in Columbus, Ohio, said that refugees already in the United States have felt penalized as their loved ones languish in camps for displaced people.

"Suddenly, the resettlement agencies were focusing on Afghan people," Mr. Gebresilasie said. "The African refugees told me, 'They forgot about us. We have been waiting so many years.'"

The U.S. refugee system was designed to provide a legal pathway for displaced people to find protection in the United States. Applicants must be recommended by the United Nations, a U.S. embassy or a nonprofit, [undergo interviews](#) with American consular officers overseas and gather documents that can be difficult or impossible to procure in failed states: birth certificates, marriage certificates, travel documents, school records. They also undergo extensive medical and security vetting.

Once they are resettled, the refugees can petition for their immediate relatives to join them in the United States by providing DNA or other evidence of their relationship. The relative would then be interviewed at an embassy by a U.S. official before being approved for travel.

But millions of people are being admitted into the United States outside the traditional refugee program, diverting resources from those who have been waiting for years.

Much attention has been paid to migrants crossing the border in record numbers, in part because of decisions by Republican-led states like Florida and Texas to send some of them to [liberal bastions like Martha's Vineyard](#) as a way to provoke outrage.



Those migrants can secure asylum if they can prove they would be persecuted at home; otherwise they face deportation. More than a million have been turned away on the basis of a Trump-era public health measure called Title 42, which allows the United States to expel people who would have otherwise been admitted for an evaluation of their asylum claims or placed into deportation proceedings.

In special circumstances, the United States government can grant “parole” to people from other countries, a legal tool that allows them to enter the country but does not automatically confer a green card or citizenship. That is what Mr. Biden’s administration has done in the cases of many refugees from Afghanistan, Ukraine and now Venezuela.

Over the past two years, the Biden administration has taken some steps to rebuild the overburdened refugee system, even as the president and his senior aides [have debated how to unwind the Trump administration’s anti-immigration agenda](#). Mr. Biden has expressed concern about Republican attacks over his immigration policies, particularly as apprehensions at the U.S. southern border have hit [record](#) levels.

The White House named Andrew Nacin, a former WordPress developer who worked on immigration issues for the Obama administration, to lead the effort. Mr. Nacin is streamlining the White House’s digital services and is trying to apply some lessons learned from the scramble to assist Afghans and Ukrainians.

His team plans to expand a program, currently used for Afghans and Ukrainians, that has allowed private citizens to sponsor refugees who seek to move to the United States.

Officials also are developing a more efficient application system, modeled after the emergency response to help Afghans, that would allow refugees to do their medical exams, interviews and security screening in tandem rather than waiting years between each step.

While the administration has a goal of hiring nearly 400 refugee officers, it currently has just 240, according to data provided by Citizenship and Immigration Services.

The president has said he is committed to fulfilling a campaign promise to reverse Mr. Trump’s limits on accepting refugees. The administration recently informed Congress that it would set the annual cap on the number of refugees at a maximum of 125,000 people, the same level as last year.

Mr. Trump, by contrast, set the limit at 15,000, the lowest it has been in the history of the refugee program.

The refugee numbers include only those who are legally resettled in the United States; asylum seekers who cross the border from Mexico, for example, do not count toward the limit. Nor do the Ukrainians, Afghans or Venezuelans who come in under humanitarian parole.

But the United States has not even come close to hitting the 125,000-person limit, in part because it simply has not had enough personnel to get through the backlog.

By the end of 2021, the United States had tallied just 11,411 refugees, the smallest number since the establishment of the refugee program. The Biden administration resettled about 25,400 refugees this past fiscal year, according to the State Department.

In interviews, senior administration officials said it was unlikely they would hit their target in the coming year.

For some applicants, time has run out.

Redi Rekab, an Eritrean widower, applied more than four years ago for his two teenage children stranded in Ethiopia to join him in Columbus, Ohio. He thought their reunion was imminent after the family submitted DNA.

Almost two years later, there had been no movement in their case. His son, Tiferi, grew impatient.

A few weeks ago, Mr. Rekab, a 54-year-old warehouse worker, said he was shocked to receive a call from his son, who said he had reached Libya and needed money to pay a smuggler for onward travel. Mr. Rekab said that he has been trying, in vain, to persuade his son to wait a little longer for approval to make a fresh start in the United States, rather than take the perilous — and often deadly — trip by sea for an uncertain future in Europe.

“The U.S. didn’t help me bring my children,” Mr. Rekab said. “But they approved people from Afghanistan and Ukraine in a very short time. It shows the U.S. doesn’t value us.”

Back in Milwaukee, Mr. Aden says his sons, who are now 21 and 22, represent a gaping hole in the life he has built in the United States. They were babies when he left Somalia and young teenagers when he started the process to bring them to the United States eight years ago. He missed their entire childhoods.

His 13-year-old daughter, Aisha, who was born in Uganda while Mr. Aden waited for approval to come to the United States, has yet to meet her siblings.

“I kind of lost hope,” she said. “And I feel like they’re not going to come.”

Feroza Binti Abdul Rashid, a 32-year-old Rohingya Muslim — a minority group that has faced a campaign of ethnic cleansing — arrived in Milwaukee in the summer of 2021, but her husband has not even been interviewed by American authorities yet.

Through an interpreter, Ms. Rashid said her 5-year-old daughter will often point at airplanes in the sky and ask if her father is finally coming. Last week, she called her father on WhatsApp and said she would send him \$2 to help fly him over.

“She always says: ‘I only need my dad. I don’t need anything else,’” Ms. Rashid said.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/19 Britain slashes foreign aid contributions</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/health/britain-global-health-aid.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/health/britain-global-health-aid.html</a>
GIST	<p>Britain, among the leading donors to the poorest nations, has slashed its foreign aid contributions, imperiling global progress against infectious diseases, famine and climate change, as well as efforts to improve girls’ education and sexual and reproductive health.</p> <p>Since 2020, the country has cut its human rights work by 80 percent, funds for some global health programs by more than 80 percent and <a href="#">humanitarian aid</a> to Yemen, Syria and other nations by 60 percent.</p> <p>The consequences, especially for the struggling post-Covid economies of many low-income countries, have been catastrophic, experts said. The pandemic, a deepening debt crisis and the war in Ukraine are all <a href="#">undermining the capacity</a> of many low- and middle-income nations to invest in health and endangering millions of lives, according to a new report by the United Nations program for H.I.V. and AIDS, UNAIDS.</p> <p>“We’re just seeing many more people on the brink of starvation,” said Joe Cerrell, the Bill &amp; Melinda Gates Foundation’s managing director for global policy in Europe, the Middle East and East Asia. “You couldn’t pick a worse time to be to be pulling back.”</p>

The latest blow [is expected](#) by the end of this month, when Britain will announce its contribution to the Global Fund, which finances the majority of campaigns against H.I.V., [malaria](#) and tuberculosis.

Leaders of the Group of 7 nations pledged their support to the fund at an event hosted by President Biden last month. But Britain, one of the fund's founders and its second-largest donor after the United States, was notably absent.

"I strongly disagree with the cuts in the budget," Tony Blair, a member of the opposition Labour Party who served as prime minister from 1997 to 2007, said in an interview.

Mr. Blair's government established the Department for International Development and committed 0.7 percent of the gross national income to overseas development aid. (By contrast, the United States spends less than 0.2 percent of its gross national income on overseas aid.)

Britain's retreat from international development began in June 2020, when Boris Johnson, then the prime minister, announced that the department would be folded into the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, diminishing the department's influence.

Then, in November 2020, Mr. Johnson's government, citing an economic crisis precipitated by the pandemic, said it would cut overseas development aid to 0.5 percent from 0.7 percent of gross national income, effectively shrinking the budget to 12 billion pounds (about \$13 billion) from 16 billion pounds.

Earlier this year, Prime Minister Liz Truss, then the foreign secretary, said the aid budget would be prioritized for housing refugees and asylum seekers from Ukraine and elsewhere, trimming the funds available for other programs by roughly another £4 billion.

As a result, "it's very difficult to find room to continue supporting things like the Global Fund," said Mark Lowcock, who led the Department for International Development from 2011 to 2017. "When you add it all up, it's clear that there's a very substantial loss of life arising from these sets of decisions."

It's "the wrong thing to do to balance the books on the backs of the world's poorest people," Mr. Lowcock added.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office said in a statement that Britain spent more than £11 billion in aid in 2021 and to date has invested £4.4 billion to fight H.I.V., tuberculosis and malaria around the world.

"We will continue to support this vitally important work and will make our pledge after informing Parliament," the office said.

H.I.V., tuberculosis and malaria together kill nearly three million people each year. The sustainable development goals of the United Nations include ending the three diseases as public health threats by 2030.

But the pandemic set back progress against all three.

"If the Global Fund doesn't have enough money, it means less treatment for tuberculosis, less treatment for people with H.I.V., less bed nets for malaria — it's as simple as that," said Dr. Peter Piot, a special adviser to the president of the European Commission and a former assistant secretary general of the U.N.

South Africa, India and Nigeria bear the greatest burden of H.I.V., tuberculosis and malaria, respectively. All three countries are members of the Commonwealth, Dr. Piot noted.

"You're the leader of the Commonwealth, and then that brings not only privileges but also responsibilities," he said of the British government.

The British Foreign Office's own assessment estimated that the cuts since 2020 might result in 250,000 more maternal and child deaths, 14.6 million unintended pregnancies, 4.3 million unsafe abortions and 700,000 fewer girls receiving an education.

The Global Fund, by its own estimate, has saved 50 million lives since its launch in 2001. With \$18 billion from donor countries, it could save another 20 million lives over the next three years, said the fund's executive director, Peter Sands.

"You have to have some pretty good reasons not to do that," he said.

Other G7 countries may be able to make up for some of the shortfall in multilateral programs like the Global Fund, but Britain was the sole supporter of many programs for girls' education; sexual and reproductive health; and neglected tropical diseases.

Those donations have been easier to scale back than others that are tied up in contractual obligations to the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund.

In May 2021, for example, Britain abruptly ended a £1 million annual donation to a program that provided treatment for trachoma — a bacterial eye infection — to 1.7 million people in Zambia. The program had just one month to line up alternative funding, said Nicholas Mutale, the executive director of Lions Aid Zambia, a civil society group that helps the Zambian government disburse treatments.

Although the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation provided some money as a stopgap, the trachoma program had to cancel about 2,000 planned surgeries. "About half of them may have lost their sight by now," Mr. Mutale said. "The effect of the disability is, of course, quite, quite, quite grim."

Given its limited resources, the Zambian government has to prioritize "mainstream" diseases that result in loss of life, like H.I.V., over neglected diseases like trachoma, he said.

"We all have to look out and begin to see how we could stand on our own two feet to try and support our own interventions," he added. "But before we get to that, it would be nice for those that are standing to try and share the little that they have."

The British government is under growing pressure to reduce spending in the face of an economic crisis. On Monday, Ms. Truss was forced to reverse almost all of a package of planned tax cuts that had provoked turmoil in the financial markets. She has promised other measures in two weeks' time to close a budget gap still estimated at tens of billions of dollars.

A previous reduction in the aid budget faced strong opposition inside the governing Conservative Party, but it may prove easier to cut again than already strained domestic spending.

For now, the country continues to support refugees and migrants and, at 0.5 percent of the gross national income, its contribution to global aid is still significant, noted Ian Mitchell, a senior fellow at the Center for Global Development in Washington, D.C.

But Britain's economic troubles cannot fully justify its withdrawal of development aid, Mr. Mitchell said. The country "seems oblivious to the fact that everyone else is having these problems as well," he said.

In an interconnected world, funding global health is also a matter of self-interest. Last year, Britain cut its contribution to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative by 95 percent for at least five years.

"Lo and behold, we're seeing polio re-emerging, indeed in London," said Sarah Champion, a Labour member of Parliament and the chair of a committee that monitors the government's aid spending.

The current trend also erodes Britain's standing as a world leader, she said. "It's as heartbreaking as it is humiliating, to be quite honest."

HEADLINE	10/18 NYC tent camp for influx arriving migrants
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/nyregion/migrant-tents-randalls-island.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/nyregion/migrant-tents-randalls-island.html</a>
GIST	<p>New York is set to open a winterized tent shelter for newly arrived asylum seekers on Randalls Island on Wednesday. The facility, with beds for about 500 single men as well as a recreation center and cafeteria, will begin operations as soon as buses begin arriving at the Port Authority in the morning, officials said.</p> <p>The selection of the site, on a windy, difficult-to-reach island in the East River that houses a Fire Department facility, athletic fields and summer festivals — but no homes or businesses — has been roundly criticized by members of the City Council, who said it would be inhumane during the winter.</p> <p>But as officials led a gaggle of reporters through the 84,400-square-foot facility on Tuesday, they insisted that it would be more comfortable than existing shelters. Brand-new sheets and pillows sat atop rows of cots, and the recreation room featured plush couches, big-screen televisions and games like chess, Scrabble and cribbage. A table nearby was full of office phones capable of making international calls, and there was Wi-Fi throughout the facility.</p> <p>There were new washers and dryers where officials said that laundry would be cleaned and folded for the migrants, as well as wheelchair-accessible bathrooms and trailers where people could be isolated as they await the results of tests for communicable diseases.</p> <p>The officials said the goal of the facility was to allow people to rest after their long journey — typically from Texas, which has bused thousands of migrants into New York in recent months — and to allow a more thorough intake than what is possible at the Port Authority Bus Terminal in Midtown Manhattan where they arrive.</p> <p>“Forty-five minutes is not enough time to reach a family member who you may not have spoken with in days, weeks, months, years, figure out where you’re going to be for the next several years of your life,” said Dr. Ted Long, a senior official in the city’s public health care system.</p> <p>“You need more time, and that’s what we’re going to do here.”</p> <p>Dozens of people being trained to work at the site were also on hand. Officials said that 90 percent of the case managers spoke Spanish, and would help people get in touch with contacts in the United States, ascertain where they wanted to go, assess their medical needs and provide other services. A cafeteria will provide three meals a day.</p> <p>A security team was also on hand and was coordinating with local law enforcement, they said. While the men will be free to come and go as they please, there will be a 10 p.m. curfew. The goal is to have people stay at the facility for about four days, but there will be no limit to how long migrants can remain, they said.</p> <p>While the officials could not provide a number for the total cost of the facility, they put it in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, noting that the shelter could be scaled up to house 500 additional people, though more staff would have to be hired for that.</p> <p>The tour was led by Anne Williams-Isom, deputy mayor for health and human services; Zach Iscol, commissioner for emergency management; Manuel Castro, commissioner of immigrant affairs; and Dr. Long.</p> <p>Mr. Iscol said the city had looked at more than 80 sites before deciding on Randalls Island. A previous project to construct tents at Orchard Beach, in the Bronx, was abandoned after an uproar from local residents, immigrants’ rights advocates and elected officials from around the city. There was particular concern about flooding that occurred there during a mild rain.</p>

Mr. Iscol said that flooding would not be an issue at Randalls Island because the parking lot on which the tents were constructed was slightly above ground level. He put the cost to “demobilize” the Orchard Beach site at \$325,000.

“There is no perfect place to be doing these kinds of operations,” Mr. Iscol said.

The facilities are temperature-controlled, Mr. Iscol said, and will be able to stay warm as the weather cools. It was unclear how long the facility would remain open.

The buses that have been arriving at the Port Authority have largely been coming from El Paso, Texas, and while the flow appeared to slow after [the federal government announced last week](#) that it would not allow Venezuelan asylum seekers across the southern border, officials said that buses were still arriving.

Ms. Williams-Isom said the city was “very appreciative” of the Biden administration’s efforts to slow the arrival of migrants, and that it was asking for more federal support to deal with the influx. The city has submitted an application to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, she said.

The city was also looking at different funding sources, including donations, to pay for tickets for migrants who want to live in other states, the officials said. Mr. Castro said that some migrants had taken the free ticket to New York to get out of Texas, but that they ultimately wanted to go to Florida, where there is a large Venezuelan community.

Families with children will be sent to the Row Hotel in Midtown for services similar to those offered on Randalls Island, the officials said, adding that there were few single women among the arrivals.

Earlier this month, as the city’s shelter system became overwhelmed, Mayor Eric Adams announced a state of emergency, allowing New York to bypass the usual regulations associated with operating homeless shelters. The city is calling the new facility on Randalls Island a “humanitarian emergency center.”

Mr. Castro said this influx of immigrants was markedly different than any other in the previous century. He said the difference was the situation at the border in Texas, where officials are putting people on buses to northern cities to draw attention to a rising number of migrants. He said that people were being given a choice between a free bus to a northern city or making it on their own with practically nothing, which amounted to a form of coercion.

“This situation is being caused by political actors and New York City is just having to respond,” he said.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 NKorea fires artillery near sea boundaries</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/18/north-korea-fires-artillery-shells-near-border-wit/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/18/north-korea-fires-artillery-shells-near-border-wit/</a>
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea fired artillery shells near its sea boundaries with South Korea late Tuesday, a day after the South began annual military drills to better deal with North Korean provocations.</p> <p>South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement early Wednesday that North Korea fired about 100 shells off its west coast and 150 rounds off its east coast. It said the South Korean military broadcast messages several times asking North Korea to stop the firing, but there were no reports of violence between the rivals.</p> <p>South Korea’s military said the shells didn’t land in South Korean territorial waters but fell inside maritime buffer zones the two Koreas established under a 2018 inter-Korean agreement aimed at reducing front-line animosities.</p> <p>It’s the second time North Korea has fired shells into the buffer zones since last Friday, when it shot hundreds of shells there in its most significant direct violation of the 2018 agreement.</p>



South Korea's military said North Korea must halt provocations that undermine peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. It added that it is boosting its military readiness and, in coordination with the United States, is closely monitoring North Korea's moves.

The North's artillery tests draw less outside attention than its missile launches. But its forward-deployed long-range artillery guns pose a serious security threat to South Korea's populous metropolitan region, which is about 40 to 50 kilometers (25 to 30 miles) from the border with North Korea.

In recent weeks, North Korea has conducted a spate of weapons tests in what it calls simulations of nuclear strikes on South Korean and U.S. targets in response to their "dangerous military drills" involving a U.S. aircraft carrier. North Korea views regular military exercises between Washington and Seoul as an invasion rehearsal.

North Korea's military said Friday's artillery firing drills were meant to issue a warning to South Korea for staging live-firing exercises at a border area that the North calls "reckless provocation." South Korea's military said its training didn't violate the 2018 accord.

On Monday, South Korea's military began its annual 12-day field exercises to improve its operational capabilities in response to various types of North Korean provocations. It said an unspecified number of U.S. troops will take part in this year's drills.

North Korea has test-launched 15 missiles since it resumed testing activities on Sept. 25. One of them was an intermediate-range ballistic missile that flew over Japan and demonstrated a range capable of reaching the Pacific U.S. territory of Guam and beyond.

Some foreign experts say North Korean leader Kim Jong Un would eventually aim to use his expanded weapons arsenal to pressure the United States and others to accept his country as a legitimate nuclear state and lift economic sanctions on the North.

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HEADLINE	10/18 Study: life expectancy rises parts of Europe
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/18/life-expectancy-rises-in-parts-of-europe-as-us-sti/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/18/life-expectancy-rises-in-parts-of-europe-as-us-sti/</a>
GIST	<p>Life expectancy rates started to rebound last year in multiple countries throughout Europe following their COVID-19-era dip in 2020, according to a new study.</p> <p>The study, titled "Life expectancy changes since COVID-19" and <a href="#">published</a> Monday in the journal Nature Human Behaviour, looked at life expectancy rates for 29 countries that included most of Europe, the U.S. and Chile.</p> <p>Researchers found that eight countries made significant strides in improving their life expectancy during 2021, including Belgium, England, France, Italy, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Wales.</p> <p>But a large number of countries in Eastern Europe — such as Bulgaria, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary — were found to share in the U.S.' struggles (third-largest decline overall) with improving life expectancy deficits. Germany, Scotland and Northern Ireland in Western Europe also saw a downward trend in the metric, albeit at less severe rates.</p> <p>The study said that a lack of vaccination, especially in those under 60 years old, is thought to have contributed to some countries' declining life expectancy. It also suggested that the U.S.' life expectancy rate will continue its slump.</p> <p>"Everyone was hit in 2020 ... 2020 was about policy response and 2021 becomes a story of vaccination, and the U.S. was not a success story," Theresa Andrasfay, a gerontology scholar at the University of Southern California who is not affiliated with the study, <a href="#">told</a> USA Today.</p>

	The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <a href="#">reported</a> in August that the life expectancy for women had dropped from 79.9 years in 2020 to 79.1 in 2021. American men lost a full year between 2020 and 2021, going from 74.2 years (2020) to 73.2 the following year.
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HEADLINE	<b>10/19 Britain inflation 10.1% driven by food prices</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/business/uk-prices-inflation-september.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/business/uk-prices-inflation-september.html</a>
GIST	<p>Consumer prices in Britain rose 10.1 percent in September from a year earlier, continuing their steep climb as the nation grapples with rapidly increasing food prices, high energy costs and political uncertainty.</p> <p>The annual inflation rate returned to its fastest pace since 1982, matching the pace set in July. It rose from 9.9 percent in August. Inflation was expected to peak next month, at a slightly higher rate, but a <a href="#">reversal in the government's policy</a> to hold down household energy bills has made the future path of prices even more uncertain.</p> <p>Prices were pushed higher by large increases in the cost of food and, to a lesser extent, at restaurants and hotels, in September. Food prices rose 14.5 percent last month from a year earlier, the largest annual rise in more than 40 years, according to the Office for National Statistics. High energy costs were still contributing to inflation growing at its fastest pace in decades. But price increases are widespread across goods and services, so core inflation, which excludes food and energy prices, rose 6.5 percent from a year earlier, up from 6.3 percent in August.</p> <p>It's another sign of the stickiness of inflation that politicians and policymakers are facing all over the world. That is encouraging central bankers to go for steeper increases in interest rates, in an effort to send a firm message that they will get inflation back down and won't let rapid price increases become entrenched in the economy.</p> <p>But constantly changing fiscal policies, as governments try to support households through increases in the cost of living, are also complicating the picture.</p> <p>Just under six weeks ago, Prime Minister Liz Truss of Britain pledged to <a href="#">freeze household energy bills</a>, one of the biggest sources of inflation increases, from October for the next two winters. This week, much of Ms. Truss's economic agenda <a href="#">was scrapped</a> by Britain's new finance minister, Jeremy Hunt, as he tried to restore calm in financial markets, which had seemingly stopped believing in the government's fiscal credibility. One victim of Mr. Hunt's policy reversal was Ms. Truss's landmark policy on energy bills; now Britons are guaranteed a freeze on their bills only until April. After that the government said it would come up with a less expensive and more targeted plan to help people with their bills.</p> <p>If households had to return to paying a price cap set by market prices through Ofgem, the government's energy regulator, the headline rate of inflation would increase by about five percentage points, economists at Pantheon Macroeconomics wrote in a research note this week. But, they said, it's too soon to forecast what is most likely to happen as the government is still devising a new plan to help with bills beyond April.</p> <p>The <a href="#">Bank of England</a> has been raising interest rates since December to tackle inflation. At its past two meetings it raised rates by half a percentage point, double its previous moves, amid signs of broadening inflationary pressures, especially in the labor market, where wages are rising and large numbers of people are staying out of the work force.</p> <p>While the central bank is expected to keep raising interest rates for several more months, analysts question how high rates can go and how long the increases will continue as the British economy slows down. High inflation is squeezing household budgets and there are growing predictions that the economy will contract next year amid a decline in consumer spending.</p>

	<p>The International Monetary Fund predicted the British economy would go from 3.6 percent growth this year to a 0.3 percent contraction next year “as high inflation reduces purchasing power and tighter monetary policy takes a toll on consumer spending and business investment.”</p> <p>Traders are currently betting the central bank will raise interest rates above 5 percent next year, from 2.25 percent.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Federal Reserve eyes higher interest rates?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/business/economy/federal-reserve-inflation-november-meeting.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/business/economy/federal-reserve-inflation-november-meeting.html</a>
GIST	<p>Federal Reserve officials have coalesced around a plan to raise interest rates by three-quarters of a point next month as policymakers grow alarmed by the staying power of rapid price increases — and increasingly worried that inflation is now feeding on itself.</p> <p>Such concerns could also prompt the Fed to raise rates at least slightly higher next year than previously forecast as officials face two huge choices at their coming meetings: when to slow rapid rate increases and when to stop them altogether.</p> <p>Central bankers had <a href="#">expected to debate</a> slowing down at their November meeting, but a rash of recent data suggesting that the labor market is still strong and that inflation is unrelenting has them poised to delay serious discussion of a smaller move for at least a month. The conversation about whether to scale back is now more likely to happen in December. Investors have entirely priced in a fourth consecutive three-quarter-point move at the Fed’s Nov. 1-2 meeting, and officials have made no effort to change that expectation.</p> <p>Officials may also feel the need to push rates higher than they had expected as recently as September, as inflation remains stubborn even in the face of substantial moves to try to wrestle it under control. While the central bank had penciled in a peak rate of 4.6 percent next year, that could nudge up depending on incoming data. Rates are now set around 3.1 percent, and the Fed’s next forecast will be released in December.</p> <p>Fed officials have grown steadily more aggressive in their battle against inflation this year, as the price burst sweeping the globe has proved more persistent than just about anyone expected. And for now, they have little reason to let up: A report last week showed that <a href="#">Consumer Price Index prices</a> climbed by 6.6 percent over the year through September even after food and fuel prices were stripped out — a new 40-year high for that closely watched core index.</p> <p>“It’s a little bit hard to slow down without an apparent reason,” said Alan Blinder, a former Fed vice chair who is now at Princeton University.</p> <p>Mr. Blinder expects the Fed to make another big move at this coming meeting. “If you were Jay Powell and the Fed and slowed to 50, what would you say?” he said. “They can’t say we’ve seen progress on inflation. That would be laughed out of court.”</p> <p>Policymakers came into the year expecting to barely lift interest rates in 2022, <a href="#">forecasting</a> that they would close out the year below 1 percent, up from around zero. But as inflation ratcheted steadily higher and then plateaued near the quickest pace since the early 1980s, they became more determined to stamp it out, even if doing so comes at a near-term cost to the economy.</p> <p>Officials are afraid that if they allow fast inflation to linger, it will become a permanent feature of the American economy. Workers might ask for bigger wage increases each year if they think that costs will steadily increase. Companies, anticipating higher wage bills and feeling confident that consumers will not be shocked by price increases, might increase what they’re charging more drastically and regularly.</p>

“The longer the current bout of high inflation continues, the greater the chance that expectations of higher inflation will become entrenched,” Mr. Powell, the Fed chair, [warned at his](#) news conference last month.

There are mounting signs in the data that today’s inflation is less and less the result of one-off trends that are likely to fade on their own over time. Supply chains are healing, and shipping costs that had spiked have come back down, but consumer prices continue to increase rapidly month after month. Those increases [are driven by a broad array](#) of goods and services, including climbing housing costs, pet care services and dental visits.

In their [latest meeting minutes](#), officials acknowledged that “inflation was declining more slowly than they had previously been anticipating” and that price pressures “had persisted across a broad array of product categories.” Since then, inflation has only shown signs of deepening: Even [measures of inflation](#) that try to strip out noise in the data are unusually firm.

And there is little evidence, so far, that the Fed’s policy is working to tamp down price increases. Fed moves take time to play out, but their effects are already pretty clear in overall economic data: The housing market is slowing sharply, demand is beginning to pull back and people are eating into their savings stockpiles. Yet prices have shown little reaction to those trends.

“We haven’t yet made meaningful progress on inflation,” Christopher Waller, a Fed governor, said during [a recent speech](#).

If that continues, it could force Fed officials to do more next year to constrain rate increases. James Bullard, the president of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis and a voter on policy this year, signaled in [an interview with Reuters](#) last week that he might favor another big three-quarter-point rate increase in December — taking the policy rate to around 4.6 percent — and then further moves next year.

It’s “very possible” that incoming data could push officials “higher on the policy rate,” Mr. Bullard said. He said it was also possible that price increases would begin to fade, however, allowing for a pause.

Neel Kashkari, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, said [at an event on Tuesday](#) that absent actual progress on lowering core inflation, he did not see why he would [favor stopping](#) rates at 4.5 or 4.75 percent next year.

“We’re not even sure that the problem is not getting worse, I’m not ready to declare a pause until we at least have that confidence,” he said.

Nathan Sheets, global chief economist at Citi, expects that Fed officials will slow their rate increases in line with their most recent economic projections: moving by three-quarters of a point in November, half a point in December and a quarter-point early in 2023 before pausing. But he said there were notable risks that they end up raising rates by more.

“The Fed has struggled to explain that even if it hikes by less than three-quarters of a point, it remains determined to fight against inflation,” Mr. Sheets said.

The central bank does not want investors to believe that its dedication to fighting inflation is beginning to crack. If market players think that, financial conditions might ease, making credit cheaper and more available and working at cross-purposes to the Fed’s goals. That happened after Mr. Powell’s July news conference, when the chair hinted that rate increases might soon slow and investors incorrectly began to expect an imminent central bank retreat.

“When he opened the door to it, the market said, ‘Aha! The Fed’s pivoting,’” Mr. Sheets said. “It’s been a tricky message so far.”

Of course, there are some reasons to hope that the inflation picture could change, which would give the Fed a more clear-cut reason to slow down.

Used car prices are coming down at a wholesale level, and that could begin to more fully feed into consumer prices. Retailers are [announcing discounts](#) as inventories pile up. Companies, which continue to rake in [unusually high profits](#) as they manage to charge more than their goods and services cost to produce, are expected to [slash their profit guidance](#) as consumers begin to pull back.

There are also some nascent signs that the labor market is cooling back to something more normal. Job openings have begun to come down, and [average hourly earnings](#) have shown signs of moderating.

But hiring has persisted at an unusually rapid pace, and a quarterly measure of wages and benefit compensation that the Fed puts greater stock in — the [Employment Cost Index](#) — has continued to climb rapidly. That could keep pressure on service prices, as restaurants and health care providers try to cover rising labor bills, and higher pay could help consumers to keep spending.

At the same time, new problems could emerge: Gas prices have risen again this month, for instance, and their future trajectory is uncertain.

Recent history offers plenty of reasons for caution. The Fed has spent 18 months hoping that inflation would soon abate, only to have that expectation repeatedly dashed by reality.

But with an outlook that is so uncertain, officials have emphasized in recent speeches that policy will be made on a meeting-by-meeting basis — one reason it is too soon to say whether a fifth big rate move in December will be appropriate.

“The outlook for inflation and economic activity is subject to unusual uncertainty,” Michelle Bowman, a Fed governor, [said in a speech](#) last week. “We should continue to reiterate that we will remain ‘highly attentive to inflation risks.’ This is probably the best and clearest forward guidance we can provide at this point.”

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HEADLINE	10/19 Russian officials: hold on Kherson tenuous
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/19/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#russian-officials-hint-that-their-hold-on-kherson-is-shaky">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/19/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#russian-officials-hint-that-their-hold-on-kherson-is-shaky</a>
GIST	<p>The commander of the Russian invasion said on Tuesday that his army may face “hard decisions” about its tenuous hold over the strategically important region of Kherson, just minutes after a top Moscow-appointed official there announced an evacuation of civilians from four occupied districts.</p> <p>Gen. Sergei Surovikin, the top Russian commander in Ukraine, acknowledged in a rare interview that the situation in the Kherson region has been “difficult” after the Ukrainian army damaged two key connections to other Russian occupied territory. For weeks, Ukrainian forces have been advancing slowly toward the regional capital, the city of Kherson, in a counteroffensive aimed at driving the Russians back across the Dnipro River.</p> <p>In <a href="#">a video statement</a>, Vladimir Saldo, the head of the regional occupation administration, said that residents would be evacuated from four districts on the west side of the Dnipro River. Mr. Saldo — who was appointed governor of the Kherson region by the Kremlin shortly after Russia formally annexed the territory at the end of September — cited the risk of shelling and the need for Russia to build defensive lines to repel an expected Ukrainian attack.</p> <p>General Surovikin, in his first public remarks since he was <a href="#">appointed as head of the Russian military force</a> in Ukraine on Oct. 8, said that the Russian Army would assist the evacuation and stressed the challenging conditions his forces face — with a tacit acknowledgment that a retreat from the city of Kherson might be necessary.</p>

“Our future plans and actions regarding the city of Kherson will depend on the unfolding military-tactical situation,” he said in a televised statement. “I repeat — today it is already quite difficult.”

The announcements underscored Russia’s precarious hold on the strategically important swath of Ukrainian land that allows the Russian forces to operate on the western side of the Dnipro River, which divides the country into two halves. That control allows Russia to threaten the rest of the Ukrainian-controlled Black Sea coast, including the symbolic city of Odesa. But advancing Ukrainian forces have severed the bridges that were used to resupply and reinforce Russian troops on the west bank of the Dnipro River.

Ukraine has coveted the liberation of Kherson since the first weeks of the war, when the city became the first — and so far only — regional capital to fall to Russian forces since the invasion began.

But as Ukrainian forces push closer to the city limits, they face a conundrum: Unlike the Russian military, which has no apparent qualms about targeting infrastructure and killing civilians to achieve its war aims, Ukraine would like to avoid destroying Kherson in the process of recapturing it. If Russian forces put up a concerted fight to keep the city, Ukraine might hesitate to use all its firepower.

Pro-Russian military bloggers — an increasingly vocal group in Russia — praised Gen. Surovikin for being honest about the challenges in Kherson. Many interpreted his statement as a sign that Russia might be preparing for a large-scale battle, while others said it could be a sign of a coming retreat.

“There are three options here: either our forces would dig in where they are, or they would retreat to the city of Kherson, trying to engage the enemy in street fighting,” [said](#) Vladlen Tatarsky, a popular blogger. “Or they would evacuate.”

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HEADLINE	10/18 Iran drone trainers to Crimea to aid Russia
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/us/politics/iran-drones-russia-ukraine.html?action=click&amp;module=RelatedLinks&amp;pgtype=Article">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/us/politics/iran-drones-russia-ukraine.html?action=click&amp;module=RelatedLinks&amp;pgtype=Article</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Iran has sent trainers to occupied Ukraine to help Russians overcome problems with the fleet of drones that they purchased from Tehran, according to current and former U.S. officials briefed on the classified intelligence, a further signal of the growing closeness between Iran and Russia since Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>The Iranian trainers are operating from a Russian military base in Crimea where many of the drones have been based since being delivered from Iran. The trainers are from the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, a branch of the Iranian military designated as a terrorist organization by the United States.</p> <p>In recent days, the Iranian drones have become an important weapon for Russia, which has used them as part of the broad strikes across Ukraine against electrical infrastructure and other civilian targets. The deployment of the Iranian trainers appears to coincide with the stepped-up use of the drones in Ukraine and indicates a deeper involvement by Iran in the war.</p> <p>“Sending drones and trainers to Ukraine has enmeshed Iran deeply into the war on the Russian side and involved Tehran directly in operations that have killed and injured civilians,” said Mick Mulroy, a former senior Pentagon official and retired C.I.A. officer.</p> <p>“Even if they’re just trainers and tactical advisers in Ukraine, I think that’s substantial,” Mr. Mulroy said. The United Nations’ human rights body has said that deliberate strikes on such civilian targets could <a href="#">constitute war crimes</a>.</p>



When Iran deployed the first batch of drones to Russia, errors by Russian operators rendered them ineffective. Mechanical issues also grounded the planes and limited their utility, according to American officials.

Originally, Russia had sent its personnel to Iran for training on the drones. But as the problems continued, Iran opted to send its trainers to Crimea, according to current and former officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss classified matters.

The Iranian personnel are far from the front lines, and are deployed to train the Russians on how to fly the drones, the officials said. It is not clear if the trainers are flying any of the aircraft themselves. It was not immediately clear how many trainers Iran had sent.

The United States has said Russia's reliance on Iranian drones is a sign of the effectiveness of Western sanctions in cutting off Moscow from international markets, leading Russia to struggle with its domestic arms production and limiting its avenues for purchasing weapons on the open market.

After the sale of drones to Moscow, the United States [imposed additional sanctions](#) on Iranians and Iranian companies that have been involved in building and designing the aircraft, as well as companies involved in their transport to Russia.

Some of the Iranian cargo planes designated by the United States are U.S.-origin Boeing 747s that have been [publicly tracked](#) and [filmed](#) flying in and out of Moscow in recent weeks. None of the footage and satellite imagery analyzed by The New York Times revealed what the aircraft were offloading in Russia. A message to Iran's mission to the United Nations was not immediately returned.

The deployment of the Iranian trainers was [reported earlier by The Daily Mirror](#).

Iran has deployed Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps personnel to other conflict zones. For example, in Yemen, the group's officers have mostly stayed out of the fight directly and instead served as trainers and advisers for their Houthi proxy force, Mr. Mulroy said.

While Iran has officially denied supplying Russia with drones for use in Ukraine, U.S. officials said that the first batch of such weapons was [delivered in August](#).

Those include Shaheds, which are single-use drones meant to explode and destroy targets, but which have a range of more than 1,000 miles. Iran has also sent the larger Mohajer-6 drone, which is used for surveillance and can carry up to four missiles.

Strikes this week by Iranian drones in Kyiv have killed multiple people. On Monday, an Iranian-made kamikaze drone struck a residential building and exploded on impact, [killing a young couple, including a woman who was six months pregnant](#).

The drones have also been used to strike at parts of the electrical power grid around the country. President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia appears to be intent on taking down Ukraine's power infrastructure to plunge the civilian population into darkness as days get colder.

"He has gone to a strategy of terror to make life miserable for the Ukrainians," Mr. Mulroy said.

But using the drones as weapons of terror, American military analysts said, makes little military sense.

The drones would be more effectively used on the front lines of the military battlefield in Kherson or Donbas. Using them on civilian targets shows that Mr. Putin is desperately trying to break the Ukrainian will to fight, according to military analysts.

"The Russians are wasting very high-end munitions, their cruise missiles and the drones provided by the Iranians, in these sporadic attacks on civilian and infrastructure targets that aren't really doing much

	lasting damage and are also not in any way going to force Ukraine to surrender,” said Mason Clark, a Russian military analyst at the Institute for the Study of War.
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HEADLINE	<b>10/19 Where have all the men in Moscow gone?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/world/europe/russia-moscow-army-draft.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/world/europe/russia-moscow-army-draft.html</a>
GIST	<p>MOSCOW — Friday afternoons at the Chop-Chop Barbershop in central Moscow used to be busy, but at the beginning of a recent weekend, only one of the four chairs was occupied.</p> <p>“We would usually be full right now, but about half of our customers have gone,” said the manager, a woman named Olya. Many of the clients — along with half of the barbers, too — have fled Russia to avoid President Vladimir V. Putin’s campaign to mobilize hundreds of thousands of men for the flagging military campaign in Ukraine.</p> <p>Many men have been staying off the streets out of fear of being handed a draft notice. As Olya came to work last Friday, she said, she witnessed the authorities at each of the four exits of the metro station, checking documents.</p> <p>Her boyfriend, who was a barber at the salon, has also fled, and the separation is taking a toll.</p> <p>“Every day is hard,” acknowledged Olya, who like other women interviewed did not want her last name used, fearing retribution. “It is hard for me to know what to do. We always planned as a couple.”</p> <p>She is hardly alone. While there are still plenty of men in a city of 12 million people, across the capital their presence has thinned out noticeably — in restaurants, in the hipster community and at social gatherings like dinners and parties. This is especially true among the city’s intelligentsia, who often have disposable income and passports for foreign travel.</p> <p>Some men who were repulsed by the invasion of Ukraine left when the war broke out; others who oppose the Kremlin in general fled because they feared imprisonment or oppression. But the majority of the men who have left in recent weeks were either called up to serve in the military, wanted to avoid the draft, or worried that Russia might close the borders if Mr. Putin declared martial law.</p> <p>No one knows exactly how many men have departed since Mr. Putin announced what he called his “partial mobilization.” But hundreds of thousands of men are gone. Mr. Putin said Friday that at least 220,000 had been drafted.</p> <p>At least 200,000 men went to neighboring <a href="#">Kazakhstan</a>, which Russians can enter without a passport, according to the authorities there. Tens of thousands of others have fled to Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Israel, Argentina and Western Europe.</p> <p>“I feel like we are a country of women now,” Stanislava, a 33-year-old photographer, said at a recent birthday party that was attended mostly by women. “I was searching for male friends to help me move some furniture, and I realized almost all of them had left.”</p> <p>Many married women remained in Moscow when their husbands fled, either after getting a povestka — a draft notice — or before one could arrive.</p> <p>“My friends and I meet for wine, and talk and support each other, to feel that we are not alone,” said Liza, whose husband, a lawyer for a large multinational company, received a notice several days before Mr. Putin announced the mobilization. He quit his job and escaped to a Western European country, but Liza, 43, stayed behind because their daughter is in school and all her grandparents are in Russia.</p> <p>Women whose husbands were drafted also suffer from loneliness — but theirs is overshadowed by fear that their spouse might not make it back alive.</p>

Last week at a voenkamat, or military commissariat, in northwestern Moscow, wives, mothers, and children gathered to say goodbye to loved ones being shipped off to fight.

“These men are like toys in the hands of children,” said Ekaterina, 27, whose husband, Vladimir, 25, was inside collecting his rations, and moments away from being shipped off to a training camp outside Moscow. “They are just cannon fodder.” She wished he had evaded the summons, saying it would have been better for him to sit in jail for a few years than to return home dead.

If Muscovites were able to indulge in a hedonistic summer in which it felt like nothing had drastically changed since the invasion of Ukraine, the situation is much different as winter sets in and the consequences of the war, including sanctions, become more evident.

On Monday, Moscow’s mayor announced that mobilization in the capital had officially ended. But many businesses were already feeling a downturn. In the two weeks following the call-up, the number of orders in Moscow restaurants with an average check of more than 1,500 rubles — about \$25 — [decreased](#) by 29 percent over the same period last year. Sberbank, Russia’s largest lender, closed 529 branches in September alone, according to [Kommersant](#) newspaper.

Many downtown storefronts are empty, with “FOR RENT” signs hanging in the windows. Even the office of Russia’s flagship airliner, Aeroflot, closed its office on chic Petrovka Street. Nearby, the storefront windows where Western designers had continued to change their mannequins through the summer were finally papered over.

“It reminds me of Athens in 2008,” said Aleksei Ermilov, the founder of Chop-Chop, comparing Moscow to the Greek capital during the global financial crisis.

Mr. Ermilov said that of the 70 barbershops in his franchise, the ones in Moscow and St Petersburg were most feeling the absence of men.

“We can see the massive relocation wave more in Moscow and St. Petersburg than in other cities, partially because more people have the means to leave there,” said Mr. Ermilov.

Local media [report](#) that attendance at one of the largest strip clubs in Moscow went down by 60 percent and that there are also fewer security guards available because they had either been mobilized or fled.

Meanwhile, downloads of dating apps have significantly increased in the countries to which Russian men fled. In Armenia, the number of new registrations on one dating app, Mamba, increased by 135 percent, a representative of the company told RBK, a Russian financial news outlet. In Georgia and Turkey the rate of new downloads was above 110 percent, while in Kazakhstan it was up by 32 percent.

“All of the most reasonable guys are gone,” said Tatiana, a 36 year old who works in technology sales, as she watched a game of billiards with her friends at women’s social club in the trendy Stolesnikov Lane. “The dating pool has shrunk by at least 50 percent.”

During the summer, the alley was full of hip young Russians enjoying themselves. But on a recent Saturday night, it was relatively empty.

Tatiana said many of her clients had left, but she said she would stay. Her job doesn’t allow for remote work, and she said she didn’t want to subject her large dog to the steerage of an airplane.

But other Muscovites still plan to leave. Another member of the women’s club, Alisa, 21, said she had just graduated and wanted to save up enough money to leave Russia once her friends had finished their studies so they could rent a place abroad together.

“I don’t see any future here in Russia, at least not while Putin is in power,” she said.

	<p>For those men who stayed, navigating the city has become nerve-racking.</p> <p>“I try to drive everywhere, because they can give out draft summons on the street and next to the metro,” said Aleksandr Perepelkin, a marketing director and the editor of the Blueprint, a fashion and culture publication.</p> <p>Mr. Perepelkin stayed in Russia because he felt an obligation to his more than 100 employees to keep the company functioning. But now his offices remind him of the early months of the coronavirus pandemic because of all the missing people. He and his business partners are unsure what to do.</p> <p>“Marketing is the type of business you do in normal life,” but not in wartime, he said in a posh cafe and co-working space. The cafe was almost entirely filled with women, including a group celebrating a birthday with a class on arranging flowers.</p> <p>At the Chop-Chop barbershop, Mr. Ermilov, the founder, said something similar. In late September, he left for Israel, and he now plans to open a business that has no physical presence in his home country and that is “less exposed to geographic risks.”</p> <p>Inside Russia, the managers of the barbershops were talking about possibly expanding services that cater to female clients.</p> <p>“We talk about reorienting the business,” said Olya, the manager. “But it is impossible to plan now, when the horizon of planning has changed to about a week.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Russia barrage targets power, water</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/world/europe/ukraine-russia-blackout-water.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/world/europe/ukraine-russia-blackout-water.html</a>
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — From towns near the front lines to high-rises in the capital, Ukrainians faced shortages of electricity, water and heat on Tuesday as Russia’s bombardment of civilian targets and infrastructure threatened millions of people with the prospect of a desolate winter without basic services.</p> <p>The Russian barrage heralds a new phase of the war — even as the Kremlin’s forces struggle on the battlefield, they have stepped up efforts to inflict suffering from afar. Civilians and infrastructure have been targets since the start of the invasion, but Russia has sharply increased long-range strikes deep into Ukraine, focusing on vital utility networks whose collapse would yield a new kind of humanitarian disaster there.</p> <p>Since Oct. 10, the Russian attacks have destroyed 30 percent of Ukraine’s power stations and caused “massive blackouts across the country,” President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Tuesday. Residents are being urged — in some cases, forced by circumstances — to conserve water and energy. Business are turning off illuminated signs, and billboards are no longer lit up at night.</p> <p>A government minister, Oleksii Chernyshov, said 408 sites in Ukraine had been struck in that time, including 45 energy facilities. Many of the attacks have also hit thermal energy plants that generate steam for heating homes and businesses.</p> <p>“The destruction of houses and lack of access to fuel or electricity due to damaged infrastructure could become a matter of life or death if people are unable to heat their homes,” Dr. Hans Henri P. Kluge, the World Health Organization’s director for Europe, <a href="#">said on Friday</a>.</p> <p>The United Nations resident coordinator for Ukraine, Denise Brown, told CNN on Tuesday that the devastation threatened “a high risk of mortality during the winter months.”</p>

In parts of Kyiv, the capital, the authorities [warned people not to drink tap water](#), which was running cloudy after it was compromised by airstrikes on Monday. In another neighborhood, a field kitchen was set up to provide food for those without water or electricity. People lined up at stores to fill bottles with fresh water, and electricity suppliers warned that the city would continue to experience blackouts while repairs were underway.

In one neighborhood on the outskirts of the northern city of Chernihiv, residents said there had been several days in a row when electricity was turned off from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m. to conserve energy. At a restaurant in the city, a waiter apologized to patrons about the dim lighting that left menus barely visible, noting that the establishment was complying with a request to turn off unnecessary lights.

In the central city of Zhytomyr, electric trolleys and trams were shut down because there was no electricity to run them, and the mayor said the hospitals were running on emergency backup generators. In some high-rises, the water pressure was so low that only the first few floors had running water.

Russia's stepped-up campaign of striking cities far from the front lines comes even as its forces have struggled in eastern and southern Ukraine. Since early last month, the Ukrainians have been on the offensive, retaking territory seized by Russia this year, though the movement appears to have slowed in recent days.

The Russian position appears to be particularly endangered in the strategic southern region and the city of Kherson, which was captured by Moscow's forces early in the war. Ukrainian forces have severed the bridges that were used to resupply and reinforce Russian troops on the west bank of the Dnipro River.

The Russian general commanding the war effort, Sergei Surovikin, on Tuesday offered a tacit admission that his forces there might have to retreat, while the Kremlin-appointed regional administrator said civilians would be evacuated from some areas.

"Our future plans and actions regarding the city of Kherson will depend on the unfolding military-tactical situation," General Surovikin said in a televised statement. "I repeat — today it is already quite difficult."

On Tuesday, Estonia's defense minister, Hanno Pevkur, warned that General Surovikin was likely to extend his reputation for ruthlessness by launching more missile and drone barrages against civilian and critical infrastructure.

"For him the civilian lives are basically nothing," Mr. Pevkur told reporters after meeting with Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III in Washington. "He's ready to continue these kinds of actions against civilians. And the aim is clear. The aim is to put the Ukrainian people under constant terror and constant threat."

The Kremlin has called the bombing of Ukrainian cities retaliation for the Oct. 8 attack that [badly damaged the only bridge](#) linking Crimea to Russian lands to the east — a vital supply line for Russian forces in southern Ukraine that was a pet project of President Vladimir V. Putin.

Russia's Defense Ministry [said](#) that it launched long-range strikes on Tuesday targeting "the military control and energy systems of Ukraine," along with depots storing foreign-supplied military weapons and equipment. Its claims could not be independently verified.

And for the first time, Russia is making heavy use of drones, [many of them bought from Iran](#), that dive into their targets and detonate their warheads on impact. Ukrainian forces claim to have shot down most of the drones, but enough have penetrated air defenses to do significant damage, prompting Ukrainians to reassess their tactics. The drones, which are cheap, are often launched by the dozens.

On the ground, antiaircraft fire — ranging from sophisticated missile batteries to soldiers shooting their rifles — has suddenly taken on new import as Ukraine scrambles to create an intensive anti-drone campaign.

In Washington on Tuesday, Brig. Gen. Patrick S. Ryder, the Pentagon's press secretary, condemned the Russian attacks against Ukraine's electrical grid, saying that the Kremlin was "obviously trying to inflict pain on the civilian society as well as try to have an impact on Ukrainian forces."

"But what we've seen so far is Ukraine be very resilient and their ability to get things like their power grids back up online quickly," General Ryder told reporters. "In the meantime, our focus will continue to be on working with them to identify what their needs are, to include things like air defense."

Ballistic missiles traveling at thousands of miles per hour are extremely hard to intercept. Cruise missiles, flying at several hundred miles per hour, are easier to hit but, flying very low, can be harder to detect. Drones generally do not travel over 100 miles per hour, making them fairly easy to shoot down. The challenge lies in their numbers.

A Ukrainian pilot was hailed as a hero after shooting down five Iranian-made drones and two cruise missiles in one sortie last week, only to collide with the debris from a drone in midair, forcing him to eject from his disabled MiG-29 fighter jet. His plane crashed, damaging several houses and a power line, but did not cause any injuries.

"Within a short period of time, we are adapting to this kind of weapon and are starting to destroy it successfully," the pilot, who identified himself only by a nickname, Karaya, told local news media afterward.

NATO countries have delivered to Ukraine air-defense systems that are effective against drones and will send more in the coming days, the alliance's secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, said on Tuesday at a conference in Berlin.

On Tuesday in Kyiv, one of several cities shaken by explosions, blasts hit a district on the eastern bank of the Dnipro, according to the mayor, Vitali Klitschko. The attack killed at least five people and knocked out electricity and water in parts of the city, officials said.

Mr. Klitschko said that an "object of critical infrastructure" had been struck, but did not elaborate. Kyrylo Tymoshenko, a senior official in Mr. Zelensky's office, said that at least three strikes had hit an energy site, resulting in "serious damage."

In Mykolaiv, a southern city, a Russian missile destroyed a residential building and a flower market, killing one man, according to Vitaly Kim, the regional administrator. He said the attack had been made with an S-300, an anti-aircraft missile.

Russia's increased use of drones and repurposed munitions like anti-aircraft missiles to hit ground targets indicates that its forces are running low on the precision-guided cruise and ballistic missiles that have been their preferred weapons for long-range strikes, according to Western analysts.

The new focus on bombing cities, Ukraine's officials and allies say, suggests that the Kremlin, unable to beat Ukraine's military, has shifted to trying to destroy Ukraine's society and its will to resist.

For many Ukrainians, the response so far has been as much defiance as fear, with people emerging from basements and subway stations once the air raid sirens stop, and going about their lives.

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HEADLINE	10/18 Storm brings taste of winter to Great Lakes
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/climate/michigan-winter-storm-severe-weather.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/climate/michigan-winter-storm-severe-weather.html</a>
GIST	An early season winter storm in Michigan's Upper Peninsula that brought snow, powerful winds and high waves to the Great Lakes region was forecast to taper down overnight Tuesday, forecasters said.



The storm moved over northern Lake Huron on Monday. On Tuesday, [warnings](#) about frequent and strong wind gusts were in effect for Lake Superior and Lake Michigan, according to the [National Weather Service in Marquette, Mich.](#) Waves on Lake Superior, which reached about 15 feet on Tuesday afternoon, were expected to taper down in the evening, said Tara Dudzik, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Marquette.

A cold front, meanwhile, was moving through the Midwest, where overnight freeze warnings were in effect in states including Missouri, Indiana and Kansas.

Record-breaking cold was forecast for early Wednesday morning across parts of the Mississippi Valley, central and southern Appalachians and the Southeast.

Winter storm warnings and winter weather advisories were in effect through Tuesday evening for parts of Michigan's Upper Peninsula and northern Wisconsin. Winds of up to 50 knots, or about 57 miles per hour, were possible along the Lake Superior shoreline in parts of Michigan's Upper Peninsula on Tuesday and were expected to decrease overnight, Ms. Dudzik said.

More than 25,000 customers [were without power](#) late Tuesday afternoon in Michigan, according to poweroutage.us, which tracks interruptions.

By Tuesday afternoon, more than 18 inches of snow had accumulated in Negaunee, Mich., and a reading in the Three Lakes region on the western side of the Upper Peninsula was at 14.4 inches, Ms. Dudzik said.

Waves of 13 to 15 feet were recorded along eastern Lake Superior, forecasters said.

Wind gusts of almost 60 m.p.h. were dashing the area around Grand Marais, Mich., on the southern shore of Lake Superior, and were expected to drop slow down into the 30s overnight, she said. Unusually cold temperatures and heavy rain could set off flooding over parts of Maine through Tuesday night, the National Weather Service [said](#).

Tim Duda, a meteorologist in Caribou, Me., said the region could expect 2 to 3 inches of rain, or up to 4 inches of rain in some eastern portions of Maine, with the heaviest rainfall on Tuesday evening. A flood watch was in effect for northern and eastern Maine.

"There is a lot of moisture funneling up from the south, coming in from the south and southwest," he said.

Large swells on Lake Michigan were captured by a camera on a buoy run by the Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant, Purdue University and LimnoTech.

While the early onset of snow was not rare for the Upper Midwest, the heaviness of the snowfall was "uncommon" and it was expected to continue into Tuesday for the north-central part of the state, said Greg Michels, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Marquette.

The winter storm will "start losing its influence here Tuesday evening" but will stretch into Wednesday, Mr. Michels said. While the storm will diminish, a lake effect — a rain or snow pattern created by the interaction between temperatures of a lake and air at a higher elevation — will persist as it moves on, he said.

"Right now it's a combination of a storm and lake effect," Mr. Michels said. "Lake Superior actually creates its own weather."

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HEADLINE	10/19 Seoul gets squeezed between US, China
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/world/asia/korea-china-us-thaad-missiles.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/19/world/asia/korea-china-us-thaad-missiles.html</a>

SOSEONG-RI, South Korea — Do Geum-yeon, 86, has lived in this valley in South Korea all her life. During the Korean War in the 1950s, her village was so peaceful that she remembers refugees taking shelter in its humble homes and quiet hills. These days, though, Ms. Do spends much of her time protesting an unwanted guest: an American military base that is expanding on a nearby hilltop.

“Now, if there is war, our village will become the first target because of that machine up there,” she said impatiently.

The “machine” Ms. Do was referring to is the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system, a powerful radar and missile-interceptor battery also known as Thaad. Five years ago, it was brought to this hamlet about 135 miles southeast of Seoul by the United States, infuriating China and prompting it to unleash economic retaliation.

Washington and Seoul said the weapons system was crucial in their defense against North Korean aggression. China argued that the United States was using North Korea as an excuse to expand its military presence in the region and make implicit threats toward its most formidable competitor. Villagers like Ms. Do and their supporters, including labor activists, have tended to agree.

Now, the Thaad system, located in an area once known for its melon patches, has become a symbol of the broader challenges facing South Korea as it tries to strike a balance between China, the country’s largest trading partner, and the United States, its main security ally.

“Thaad has brought nothing but harm to South Korea, causing economic damage and heightening tensions,” said Kang Hyunwook, another protester. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine earlier this year has magnified those concerns, he said. “If South Korea sides with one party in the rivalry between the U.S. and China, we could suffer the fate of Ukraine.”

Few things showcase the many polarizing divides in South Korea better than the Thaad system. For those who favor a strong alliance with the United States, it represents Washington’s unwavering commitment to its Asian ally. For those who oppose it, it is a reminder of the dangers of being drawn into a rivalry between two major powers.

Seongju County, which includes this village, had been known mainly for its farming community before residents grabbed national headlines protesting the arrival of the Thaad system five years ago. Villagers here — and many South Koreans elsewhere — were concerned that it could place South Korea on the front lines of a potential Sino-American conflict.

As Beijing and Washington clash over issues such as Taiwan, global supply chains and the South China Sea, anxieties have been on the rise. Numerous anti-American banners line both sides of the road that winds through the village and up to the American military base. “Yankees, go home! Thaad, go home!” they demand.

During a recent early-morning rally, Ms. Do and 20 other protesters sat on plastic chairs on a two-lane asphalt road, shouting: “We don’t need Thaad! We need peace!” An hour later, police officers removed them — carrying them in their chairs — so the road could be cleared for trucks and water and fuel tanks going up the hill to the Thaad base.

South Korea has long been careful not to take sides in the rivalry between the United States and China, benefiting from a national strategy known as “anmigyeongjung,” which loosely translates to “the United States for security and China for the economy.”

Washington has provided security for Seoul since the Korean War. But after South Korea established diplomatic ties with Beijing in 1992, China quickly replaced the United States as the country’s biggest trading partner, helping to fuel a thriving, export-driven economy. About 30 percent of South Korean exports go to China or Hong Kong — almost equaling the country’s trade with the United States, Japan and Europe combined.

Over the years, it has become increasingly difficult for South Korea to enjoy the best of both worlds. President Yoon Suk Yeol has aligned his country more closely with Washington, deepening ties in missile defense and supply chains to help deter North Korea. He has done so at the risk of provoking Beijing.

Under Mr. Yoon, South Korea opted in to the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework; increased trilateral military cooperation with the United States and Japan; and joined those nations and Taiwan in preliminary talks for a technology alliance known as “Chip 4” — all moves opposed by Beijing.

South Korean chip-makers Samsung and SK Hynix announced multibillion-dollar investments in the United States to help it secure a chip supply chain earlier this year. But China and Hong Kong still buy 60 percent of South Korea’s chip exports.

“Like it or not, China is a massive market, and abandoning it isn’t an option,” SK’s chairman, Chey Tae-won, [told reporters](#) in July.

That same month, Zhao Lijian, a spokesman for the Chinese foreign ministry, [warned](#) that South Korea should “keep in mind its own long-term interests.” In 2017, when the Thaad battery first arrived, Beijing shut down tourism to South Korea and restricted exports like K-pop in response.

Many people in the country saw the [retaliation](#) as bullying. South Koreans now regard China more [unfavorably](#) than North Korea and Japan, its former colonial ruler, according to [a survey](#) conducted in July.

“The Thaad deployment has become a weapon for China to divide South Koreans and drive a wedge into the alliance,” said Cho Kyunghwan, a research fellow at the Korea Institute for National Unification in Seoul.

Mr. Yoon’s predecessor, Moon Jae-in, tried to improve relations with Beijing by pledging a “Three Nos” policy: no additional Thaad systems; no participation in American missile defense networks; and no trilateral military alliance with Washington and Tokyo. Mr. Yoon has said he is not bound by those promises.

In an [interview](#) with The New York Times last month, Mr. Yoon said North Korea’s growing nuclear threat compelled South Korea to cooperate more closely with Washington on missile defense and that the Thaad system was a matter of national security that would not be negotiated with Beijing.

He told The Times that he would support another Thaad system in the country, depending on the evolving threat from North Korea. He also emphasized: “Our defense system is to deal with the North Korean threat, not China.”

Both American and South Korean defense officials have complained that the village protests have limited traffic in and out of the base, at times forcing American military personnel to travel there by helicopter.

In May, Gen. Paul J. LaCamera, commander of the United States military in South Korea, [called](#) for “unfettered access” to the base to ensure logistical support and to help speed up construction.

Seoul and Washington have been building new facilities at the base to train soldiers and improve their living conditions. (The allies have no official name for the military installment yet, simply referring to it as the “Thaad site” as they race to complete an environmental impact study before formally approving the stationing of the Thaad system here.)

Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup of South Korea said that the slow pace of construction has forced many of the hundreds of South Korean and American troops stationed there to live “in tents and shipping containers.” South Korean police have had to remove protesters almost daily.

After [a North Korean missile](#) flew over Japan this month, the United States military brought new equipment to the base to improve the Thaad system's link with other antimissile systems located in South Korea. North Korea is also working hard to thwart missile defenses in the region, [testing weapons considered harder to detect](#) and intercept.

The growing arms buildup only deepened villagers' worries.

"They parked Thaad in our village without asking us because we were the smallest and weakest village and they thought old people living here would not protest," said Lim Soon-boon, 68. "But it dawned on us that they were really considering us and our country cannon fodder in a war between the U.S. and China."

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HEADLINE	10/18 IRS adjusting tax rates for inflation
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/business/irs-tax-rates-inflation-2023.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/business/irs-tax-rates-inflation-2023.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The rapidly rising cost of food, energy and other daily staples could allow many Americans to reduce their tax bills next year, the I.R.S. <a href="#">confirmed on Tuesday</a>.</p> <p>Tax rates are adjusted for inflation, which in typical times means incremental movements in the thresholds for what income is taxed at what rate. But after a year that brought America's fastest price growth in four decades, the shift in rates is far more notable: an increase of about 7 percent.</p> <p>Other parts of the tax code will also be affected by the inflation adjustment. Those include the standard deduction Americans can claim on their tax returns.</p> <p>The shift would be slightly larger if not for a change Republicans made as part of President Donald J. Trump's tax overhaul that was passed in 2017. It tied rates to a measure of inflation, called the chained Consumer Price Index, that typically rises more slowly than the standard Consumer Price Index. In September, chained C.P.I. was up about a quarter of a percentage point less, compared with the previous year, than standard C.P.I.</p> <p>In dollar figures, the shift will be largest at the highest end of the income spectrum, although all seven income brackets will adjust for inflation. The top income tax rate of 37 percent will apply next year to individuals earning \$578,125 — or \$693,750 for married couples who file joint returns. That is up from \$539,900 for individuals this year. The difference: Nearly \$40,000 worth of individual income is eligible to be taxed next year at a lower rate of 35 percent.</p> <p>Middle-class workers and lower-income earners will also see benefits. The 35 percent rate will now start above \$231,250 for individuals and \$462,500 for married couples. The 32 percent rate will start above incomes of \$182,100 for individuals and \$364,200 for couples.</p> <p>The 24 percent rate will apply above individual incomes of \$95,375 — \$190,750 for couples — and the 22 percent rate starts above \$44,725 for individuals and \$89,450 for couples. The 12 percent rate will apply to individual incomes above \$11,000 and \$22,000 for married couples. The lowest rate, 10 percent, will apply to incomes up to those amounts.</p> <p>Further boosting filers, the standard deduction will rise to \$27,700 for couples, an increase of \$1,800 from this year. For individuals, it will be a \$900 increase, to \$13,850.</p> <p>Those shifts will not affect the tax rates of Americans whose salaries have kept pace with inflation over the last year. But for many Americans, that has not been the case. Inflation-adjusted weekly earnings declined nearly 4 percent from September last year to this September, the Labor Department <a href="#">reported last week</a>.</p> <p>Beyond tax rates, a variety of other provisions in the code were affected by the inflation adjustments — with benefits up and down the income spectrum.</p>

	<p>One of the government’s primary anti-poverty efforts, the earned-income tax credit for low-income workers, will be worth as much as \$7,430 (for qualifying taxpayers with three or more children), up from \$6,935 this year.</p> <p>Benefits for tax-free public transit and parking costs will rise to a maximum of \$300 a month for commuters, up \$20 from this year.</p> <p>And heirs of wealthy individuals who die in 2023 will not need to pay estate taxes on the first \$12,920,000 they inherit — an increase of nearly \$1 million from the exclusion for the estates of people who die this year.</p> <p>The I.R.S. move is just the latest government response to rapid inflation. <a href="#">Last week</a>, the Social Security Administration announced an 8.7 percent increase in benefits for 2023, the largest raise since <a href="#">1981</a>.</p> <p>That cost of living adjustment was accompanied by an increase in the amount of earnings subject to the Social Security payroll tax, which helps fund the safety net program. The maximum amount of earnings subject to what is known as the Federal Insurance Contributions Act — or FICA — tax will increase to \$160,200 from \$147,000 in 2023. Employers and employees each contribute 6.2 percent of wages up to that salary threshold, which is adjusted every year based on average wage growth.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Kent council passes public camping ban</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/kent/kent-city-council-camping-ban/281-4d71cf1a-1bbc-4f00-ab67-7209acf156a9">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/kent/kent-city-council-camping-ban/281-4d71cf1a-1bbc-4f00-ab67-7209acf156a9</a>
GIST	<p>KENT, Wash. — The Kent City Council voted unanimously to pass a public camping ban on Tuesday night.</p> <p>The ordinance bans camping outside of designated camping areas to keep people from sleeping near businesses and along the Green River.</p> <p>Before the city enforces the new rule, individuals living in unauthorized encampments will be offered alternative shelter, to temporarily store their belongings and "to address any relevant underlying conditions that may have led to the individual" to camping outside of a designated area, according to the ordinance.</p> <p>The revised camping ordinance was presented during an <a href="#">Oct. 4 Operations and Public Safety Committee meeting</a>. Officials in support of the new ordinance said camping case reports and complaints have been on the rise.</p> <p>According to the city, there were 60 camping case reports in 2019, 95 in 2020 and 72 in 2021. The city said there have been 68 camping cases reported from Jan. through July of 2022, with that number trending towards 116 for all of 2022.</p> <p>Data presented during the Operations and Public Safety Committee meeting <a href="#">showed</a> an increase in 911 calls that included the keyword “homeless.” The committee showed there were 234 calls in 2019, 488 in 2020, 465 in 2021 and more than 300 calls between Jan. and July so far this year. That total is also trending up, according to the committee, and is on track to reach an estimated 519 total calls for the year.</p> <p>The city of Kent has also received regular complaints about illegal camping from business owners and residents who have environmental concerns about areas where trash is building up.</p> <p>One of those areas is along Green River Road. In July, King County <a href="#">collected nearly 52,000 pounds of trash</a> from a site where about 100 people were camping near the river.</p>

	<p>The county <a href="#">said</a> it removed nearly 69,000 pounds of trash from areas along Green River Road during two separate cleanups in 2021.</p> <p>Under the ordinance, in addition to ensuring anyone forced from a campsite receives shelter, Health and Human Services will monitor shelter availability continuously, and law enforcement will be providing treatment options.</p> <p>City officials said filing charges against someone who is unlawfully camping will be the last resort.</p> <p>With a focus of “compassion” toward people experiencing homelessness, the city of Kent is working on a larger plan to address issues surrounding camping on properties not designated for camping.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 More rain on weekend than past 4mo. total</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/weather/first-fall-storm-more-rain-seattle-than-citys-four-months/281-92b8901b-2d66-47e2-8afd-9c1b77f434ba">https://www.king5.com/article/weather/first-fall-storm-more-rain-seattle-than-citys-four-months/281-92b8901b-2d66-47e2-8afd-9c1b77f434ba</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The fall season started nearly a month ago but it has felt more like summer over the past few weeks.</p> <p>This past weekend was one of the <a href="#">warmest on record</a> with Sunday's temperature at Sea-Tac of 88 degrees registering as the second warmest October day in the 130 years of data recording and the warmest this late in the year.</p> <p>Olympia and Bellingham also saw new daily high-temperature records over the weekend.</p> <p><b>The latest on the drought and wildfire smoke</b>  The rain is much needed as all of western Washington has dipped into drought conditions. The latest drought monitor released on Oct. 13 indicated all of the KING 5 viewing areas are within a moderate drought.</p> <p>These drought conditions have led to dry vegetation allowing for several ongoing wildfires in western Washington. <a href="#">Get the latest wildfire updates here.</a></p> <p>Our weather pattern flips Friday with wet and windy conditions sticking around through the weekend into the first day of next week as a series of fall weather-makers wallop western Washington with lowland rain, mountain snow and wind.</p> <p>The increase in precipitation and winds will help clear the air, reducing smoke, and improving the air quality. Check out <a href="#">the latest air quality and air alerts for the region.</a></p> <p><b>Weekend storm system impacts</b>  A series of weather-makers will swing through the KING 5 viewing area from Friday through Monday bringing areas of moderate rain, gusty winds and mountain snow.</p> <p><b>Rain forecast</b>  The heaviest rain accumulations are expected for the Pacific Coast and the Cascade foothills where 2-3 inches of rain will fall from Friday through Monday.</p> <p>Lighter amounts are expected for the Puget Sound lowlands but we are still anticipating a good soaking with around 1-1.5 inches possible. A few areas in Snohomish and King Counties could see higher amounts from enhanced Convergence Zone action.</p>



Seattle is forecast to pick up more than one inch of rain. This is more rain than the city has seen in four months. Since June 18, Seattle has only received 0.55 inches of rain, going down as one of the driest stretches in the city's history.

At this time, the flood risk is expected to remain low but this will be closely monitored. As always, if you live in a flood-prone area or near recent burn areas, it is always best to stay weather aware.

#### **Snow forecast**

Snow will fall in the higher elevations of the Olympics and Cascades. The highest passes will be impacted by either wet snow or a rain/snow mixture as snow levels dip down to 4,000 feet on Saturday with the potential for a rain/snow mixture as low as 3,500 feet.

This means Stevens Pass and White Pass could see potentially some slight slushy accumulations. Higher accumulations are expected for the highest peaks including Mount Baker and Mount Rainier.

Gusty winds are possible at times with each weather-maker. While sustained winds generally remain below 20 miles per hour, some gusts could exceed 30 to 40 miles per hour with higher gusts near the Strait and for gap areas. While these winds should not be enough to cause widespread tree or powerline issues, with foliage remaining on trees, some branches could come down and isolated power outages are possible. This is not expected to be a major or widespread concern at this time.

#### **Rain and snow timeline**

Rain enters the forecast Friday as the first weather maker zips into the area. This frontal system, which is the *first* in a series of weather-makers, moves out of British Columbia during the second half of Friday, increasing rain chances throughout the day.

Rain increases from west to east beginning Friday late morning and continuing into the afternoon hours. Initially, the rain begins for the Pacific Coast and along the North Coast near the Strait, overspreading the Olympic Peninsula, and eventually Puget Sound and the Cascades later in the day.

A *second* weather-maker arrives on the front's heels on Saturday. This upper air trough will bring more precipitation chances to the region on Saturday and usher in some cooler air.

The cooler temperatures will lower the snow levels down to 4,000 feet on Saturday with the possibility of a rain/snow mixture as low as 3,500 feet Saturday morning. Snow levels this low will impact some of the higher passes in western Washington over the weekend.

Expect a decrease in coverage and intensity of precipitation late Saturday into Sunday before a *third* weather maker arrives late Sunday into Monday. This will create another round of lowland rain with additional mountain snow.

The snow levels will slightly rise with this system as there's less cold air but snow levels will still range between 4,500 feet to 5,000 feet late Sunday into Monday.

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HEADLINE	10/18 King Co. property values increasing again
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news-brief-newsletter/king-county-seattle-home-property-values-increasing-again-taxes-homeowners#">https://komonews.com/news-brief-newsletter/king-county-seattle-home-property-values-increasing-again-taxes-homeowners#</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE, Wash. — The last of King County property tax valuations are in the mail and for some property owners, their property valuations are much higher than they anticipated.</p> <p>In fact, property values are up across King County, according to the County Assessor's Office.</p> <p>As of May, the most dramatic rise is in northeast King County with the trend particularly strong on the eastside.</p>

The increased valuations are so dramatic for some that they may result in noticeable increases in property taxes in those particular areas.

The annual process of making property valuation notices to taxpayers began in the spring and has continued on a rolling basis. Some homeowners told KOMO News they just received their property valuation and they've been hit with a significant increase over their 2021 assessment.

That's the case for a Queen Ann couple, Tom and Kerri Lether, who have lived in their home for 31 years in Seattle. The couple said they just got their assessment this week and were stunned.

"There is no rhyme or reason, " said Kerri Lether, "Our home valuation increased by \$250,000. Where do they get that?"

The Lethers' own three homes in Seattle and each one saw a spike in valuation.

Examples of the 2022 property value increases from the County Assessor's office include:

- Sammamish Plateau up 52%
- Kirkland, Redmond, Woodinville, and Bellevue are up roughly 45%
- Increases higher than 30% occurred in many other eastside communities including Bothell, Kenmore, Yarrow point/Hunts point, North Bend/Snoqualmie, and Carnation/Fall City

"Parts of the eastside like Sammamish year over year are up just over 50%," said Assessor John Wilson, "It naturally shocks people and they go oh my god are my taxes going to be that high, no they're not, it depends on what's in your tax bill."

Each year, as required by law, County Assessors appraise every commercial and residential parcel across the state of Washington. These values – set effective as of Jan. 1, 2022 – are what is being used to calculate property taxes due next year, 2023.

Taxes above the 1% can inch higher said Wilson once voter-approved levies and other measures get added in.

"We are calculating on what your local government is asking for, not what we think you should pay, we want to be fair and make sure no one pays a dime more than they have to more than they have to but everyone pays their fair share," Wilson said.

Receipt of the value notice triggers a 60-day window during which time a property owner can appeal their new value, but not specifically the taxes. It's important to note that increased values don't directly relate to potential tax increases. Property taxes are set yearly by taxing districts around the county -- not the King County Department of Assessments.

The county taxpayer transparency [tool can be found here](#).

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HEADLINE	10/18 Spokane Co. property taxes to rise?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.krem.com/article/money/property-taxes-could-be-on-the-rise-spokane-county/293-a8fcd76b-6a1a-482c-9ca0-032f91f9d886">https://www.krem.com/article/money/property-taxes-could-be-on-the-rise-spokane-county/293-a8fcd76b-6a1a-482c-9ca0-032f91f9d886</a>
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — <a href="#">Spokane County</a> Assessor Tom Konis says homeowners in Spokane County could pay as much as 9% more in property taxes come next year.</p> <p>"The only thing certain is death, and taxes are going to go up every year, " said Konis.</p>

	<p>The reason behind this is the fact that property values have increased by 30%, but that solely won't be passed along to property owners through tax assessments. Instead, some of that money will be voted on and potentially raised through levies and other measures.</p> <p>"We're looking at 8% inflation nationwide, and yet the municipalities are limited to 1%, which is great for us as taxpayers," said Konis. "This year, we had, of course, unprecedented value increases little over 30% county wide. We are estimating probably about a 9% total tax increase. So, there's not a direct correlation. If your value went up, 30% of your taxes are not going to go up 30%."</p> <p>Konis says municipalities are limited to a 1% increase. Spokane City Council was originally proposing a 0% increase for the upcoming year, but come next week, the committee will push for a 1% tax increase.</p> <p>Spokane City Council member Michael Cathcart is against the increase.</p> <p>"The Spokane City Council's proposal to increase taxes across Spokane is misguided during this time of inflation and looming recession," Cathcart said. "I continue to hear from families and individuals across Spokane who are struggling to afford our rising cost of living, including just making rent or mortgage payments."</p> <p>"Working families, individuals and businesses deserve representation and transparency," Cathcart continued. "With gas higher than it's ever been, housing costs at record levels and food more expensive, this is not the time to raise taxes."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Pierce Co. residents fight airport proposal</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/pierce-county-residents-fearful-of-losing-homes-farms-wildlife-vow-to-fight-airport-proposal">https://www.q13fox.com/news/pierce-county-residents-fearful-of-losing-homes-farms-wildlife-vow-to-fight-airport-proposal</a>
GIST	<p>GRAHAM, Wash. - More than 200 filled a room at the lodge at Frontier Park in Graham Monday night, vowing to fight a proposal that would build a new airport in a rural area of <a href="#">Pierce County</a>.</p> <p>Many frustrated residents at the meeting said they had no idea that land near or around their homes, businesses and farms was being considered for a larger airport.</p> <p>Arlene Murray-Adams says she was shocked to learn that her property is in one of the areas under consideration.</p> <p>"Our home will be gone," said Adams, grabbing a map. "My home is right there."</p> <p>"I'm here because I'm going to lose my home, and it's going to affect two elk herds out in this area," said Carrie Bassen, a business owner in the area. "I didn't even know this was on the table until it got passed around on Facebook. There's a lot to lose here in Graham."</p> <p>She's worried about the impacts on her business and on wildlife and the community as a whole.</p> <p>"There is a whole housing back in this area. So, it's going to affect 2,000 to 3,000 people in that area," said Carrie Bassen, pointing to a map. "My home sits right about in here."</p> <p>Dr. Shannon West <a href="#">created a Facebook page to organize residents and bring awareness</a> to the proposal after the state commission narrowed its list of sites to three locations in rural Thurston and Pierce Counties.</p> <p>"We don't lose our house, we don't lose our homes, or the animals, or the hayfields, it's all important," said Dr. West as she was speaking to the crowd.</p> <p>She feels both proposals in Pierce County would be damaging.</p>

"I don't want to lose my home, and I don't want my neighbors to lose their home. If either site was done in Pierce County, one I'll lose my home, the other one I'll lose my town," said West.

Once she started looking into where the airport might be located, she created a map for residents that could be impacted.

"My goal was to make people aware. The map that was available, if you knew where to look for it, was really hard to read. It was satellite. There weren't enough landmarks, so I enlarged it," said West.

The commission has also considered expanding Paine Field near Everett in addition to sites in Pierce County and Thurston County. The sites are all under consideration by the Commercial Aviation Coordinating Commission. We reached out to the CACC for comment regarding the meeting and are waiting to hear back. West says the site is to be chosen next summer, giving them time to stop it. She hopes more residents join in the fight.

"We are doing everything we can. If we are going to go down, we are going to go down fighting. That's how I look at it," said West.

An organizer for the group that's protesting the proposed site in Thurston County was also in attendance at the Monday night meeting. Dawn Sonntag says that group is calling themselves, "Stop the Thurston Airport." She says her group is planning to meet at 6:30 pm Wednesday in the [Sunwood Lakes community](#). Sonntag hopes to have another meeting scheduled in the coming days in Thurston County. She says she came to the Pierce County meeting Wednesday to stand in solidarity with those residents.

Pierce County Council and Pierce County Executive also sent a joint [letter](#) formally objecting to the potential new airport in Pierce County, citing reasons including environmental harm.

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HEADLINE	10/18 Russia to sever diplomatic ties to West?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thedailybeast.com/kremlin-foreign-minister-sergei-lavrov-tells-russian-diplomats-to-bid-farewell-to-west?ref=home">https://www.thedailybeast.com/kremlin-foreign-minister-sergei-lavrov-tells-russian-diplomats-to-bid-farewell-to-west?ref=home</a>
GIST	<p><a href="#">Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov</a> declared Tuesday that there is no need to maintain a diplomatic presence in western countries, in the latest sign that Russia may be toying with the idea of completely severing diplomatic ties with western countries as its <a href="#">war in Ukraine</a> nears the nine month mark.</p> <p>"There is neither point nor desire to maintain the previous presence in Western states. Our people work there in conditions that can hardly be called human," Lavrov said, according to <a href="#">TASS</a>. "Problems are being created constantly for them; they face threats of physical assaults."</p> <p>Lavrov, speaking to a group of graduates admitted to the diplomatic service, lamented that there is limited work available for <a href="#">Russians abroad</a>.</p> <p>"Most importantly, there's no work to do since Europe decided to shut off from us and sever any economic cooperation. You can't force love," Lavrov said.</p> <p>It wasn't immediately clear if Russia had immediate plans to sever diplomatic relations with western nations.</p> <p>But it's not the first time that Russia has threatened to dissolve diplomatic links with the west since invading Ukraine and facing off with western sanctions. Russia threatened to sever diplomatic ties with Bulgaria this summer, after Bulgaria expelled 70 Russian diplomats.</p>

	<p>Russia has suggested before that its relations with the west could be discarded with little effect. In March, the Kremlin provided the United States a <a href="#">“note of protest,”</a> which included a threat to sever relations, following President Joe Biden’s comments about the war in Ukraine. In August, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said if the United States were to sever relations with Russia, <a href="#">Russia would “get over it.”</a></p> <p>“They should know: we are prepared for any development of the situation. And if Washington opts to halt any contacts with Moscow, we will get over it,” Zakharova said at the time.</p> <p>Russia’s current plan is to shift its diplomatic focus to other countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. “Under these conditions, we will shift the ‘center of gravity’ to countries that are ready to cooperate with us on an equal and mutually beneficial terms and look for promising joint projects,” Lavrov said. “Many plans are being agreed at the highest and high levels that require diplomatic support, including business, joint cultural, humanitarian educational projects.”</p> <p>The announcement comes just hours after Ukraine’s foreign minister announced he would be proposing that Ukraine sever diplomatic ties with Iran over its decision to supply Russia with Iranian-made drones for the war effort. Russia has attacked Ukraine in recent days with the drones, hitting civilian infrastructure, civilians, and energy resources.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Children starve amid Yemen war</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/children-starve-yemen-teeters-return-fighting-91723256">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/children-starve-yemen-teeters-return-fighting-91723256</a>
GIST	<p>HAYS, Yemen -- An emaciated little girl lies motionless on a hospital bed and struggles to breathe. Her body is covered with sores. She can barely open her eyes.</p> <p>Hafsa Ahmed is about 2. About a dozen other children in the red-brick hospital in this southern Yemeni city are also dying of starvation.</p> <p>Hunger has long threatened the lives of hundreds of thousands of Yemen’s children. Now, the war between the country’s Iran-backed Houthi rebels and a Saudi-led coalition is threatening to escalate after months of a tenuous truce. Yemenis, and international assistance groups, worry that the situation will get even worse.</p> <p>In the city of Hodeida, with a population of roughly 3 million, al-Thawra Hospital receives 2,500 patients daily, including “super-malnourished” children, said Joyce Msuya, U.N. assistant secretary-general for humanitarian affairs. She visited the facility this month.</p> <p>Around 2.2 million Yemeni children under the age of 5 are hungry. More than half a million are severely malnourished. Some 1.3 million pregnant or breastfeeding women had severe malnutrition this year, the United Nations says.</p> <p>“This is one of the saddest visits I’ve ever done in my professional life,” Msuya said in a video released by the U.N. “There are immense needs. Half of Yemeni hospitals are not functioning, or they are completely destroyed by the war. We need more support to save lives in Yemen, children, women and men.”</p> <p>The war in Ukraine is exacerbating the situation.</p> <p>The Yemeni diet depends heavily on wheat. Ukraine supplied Yemen with 40% of its grain, until Russia's invasion cut the flow. In developed countries, people are working harder to pay higher bills. In Yemen, food is 60% more expensive than it was last year. And in poor countries, inflation can mean death.</p> <p>“Yemen has been hit three times by the Russian invasion of Ukraine,” said Peter Salisbury, a Yemen expert at the International Crisis Group. “First, by the loss of food supplies from Ukraine and higher prices on international markets. Then, by higher fuel prices. And third, by a shift in international focus.”</p>

War has raged for eight years in Yemen between Shiite Houthi rebels and pro-government forces backed by a coalition of Sunni Gulf Arab states. The Iran-backed Houthis swept down from the mountains in 2014, occupied northern Yemen and the country's capital, Sanaa, and forced the internationally recognized government to flee into exile to Saudi Arabia.

Since then, more than 150,000 people were killed by the violence and 3 million were displaced. Two-thirds of the population get food assistance.

There's a truce in place now despite the two sides' failure to renew it this month. Hafsa and more than half a million other Yemeni children are severely malnourished. Every 10 minutes, a child in Yemen dies from preventable illness, according to Save the Children.

Hafsa is the youngest of six. One died from malnutrition. Her father Ahmed, 47, works as a day laborer. Each day he can afford only some flour and cooking oil.

He and his family live in the district of Hays, about 120 kilometers (74 miles) south of the port city of Hodeida, which has seen some of the fiercest fighting in Yemen's conflict.

The children in Hays Hospital have swollen bellies and twig-like limbs. Eventually, prolonged malnutrition "causes their organs to stop functioning," Dr. Nabouta Hassan said.

Hassan, who oversees the hospital's malnutrition ward, said that every month it receives up to 30 children suffering from diseases related to acute malnutrition.

Hodeida, along with the northern province of Hajjah, includes the hardest-hit areas by extremely severe food insecurity and acute malnutrition, according to the U.N.

Mohammed Hussein, a 49-year-old father of five, lives in a camp for displaced people in the outskirts of the city of Abs in northern Hajjah province.

He said he has been displaced four times since the war began in 2014.

"I lost my home, farmland, everything," he said over the phone.

He lost a 9-month-old son three years ago. He has a 1-year-old and a 3-year-old who are starving.

Their main dish is bread mixed with water and salt. Some days, neighbors give his family meat, chicken or pasta. Hussein's too poor to take his kids to the hospital.

"There is no money, and I am jobless," he said. "They could die also from hunger."

The U.N. food agency has cut rations for millions of people due to critical funding gaps and soaring global food prices. The World Food Program has for months prioritized the most vulnerable 13.5 million Yemenis, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, or OCHA.

The U.N. said that by the end of September, its humanitarian response plan for Yemen secured \$2 billion of the \$4.27 billion needed to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance and protection services to 17.9 million people.

Abdulwasea Mohammed, advocacy, media and campaigns manager for Oxfam in Yemen, said his group needs more money, more consistent access to the most vulnerable, and a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

"The response is saving lives every day despite this," he said.



HEADLINE	10/18 Concern for Covid subvariants?
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/covid-subvariants-concerned/story?id=91625439">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/covid-subvariants-concerned/story?id=91625439</a>
GIST	<p>Even as <a href="#">COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations</a> driven by the omicron subvariant BA.5 continue to fall in the United States, the proportion of infections attributed to other omicron offshoots is rising.</p> <p>According to <a href="#">data</a> from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, BA.5 currently makes up 67.9% of new virus cases as of last Friday.</p> <p>The remaining cases are made up of BA.4.6 -- which has been circulating in the U.S. for weeks -- as well as newly identified subvariants like BQ.1, B.Q.1.1 and BF.7, which have been spreading mainly in Europe.</p> <p>The subvariants have been attributed to an increase in infections in Europe. According to the <a href="#">latest weekly report</a> from the World Health Organization, published Oct. 12, there were more than 1.66 million COVID-19 cases recorded across the continent, up from more than 1.53 million cases recorded in the <a href="#">previous report</a> published on Oct. 5</p> <p>Throughout the course of the pandemic, Europe has been considered a bellwether of what's come in the U.S.</p> <p>Should we be concerned about the new subvariants? Experts told ABC News that the U.S. may see a new wave as we enter the colder weather months and move indoors and it's important to remain vigilant.</p> <p>"In the next few months, I think there's reasonable expectation that we'll probably see a fall wave," said Dr. John Brownstein, an epidemiologist and chief innovation officer at Boston Children's Hospital and an ABC News contributor. "But the magnitude of that wave, I think, is still very much in question."</p> <p><b>What are the new subvariants?</b></p> <p>The subvariant that makes up the most cases after BA.5 is BA.4.6. An offshoot of the omicron subvariant BA.4, it's estimated to account for 12% of new cases, according to the CDC.</p> <p>Then there are newer subvariants, which have recently begun steadily spreading in the U.S: BQ.1 and BQ.1.1, Both are offshoots of BA.5 and make up 12% of new cases together. This is a rapid rate of increase considering they made up just 3% of new cases for the week ending Oct. 1.</p> <p>"It seems to have come out of nowhere," Dr. Peter Chin-Hong, an infectious diseases specialist at the University of California, San Francisco, told ABC News. "But it didn't really come of nowhere. It was first seen in Nigeria in summer and then spread to other countries in Europe and Asia, and now in the United States."</p> <p>Another offshoot of BA.5 that is picking up speed is BF.7. It makes up 5.3% of new cases in the U.S., up from 3.2% just two weeks prior.</p> <p>Meanwhile, there have been reports of another subvariant called XBB, which combines multiple strains of the omicron variant and other COVID-19 variants and has been detected mostly in Asia. So far, it has not been detected in the U.S.</p> <p>Not much is known about any of these newer subvariants. <a href="#">Preliminary data</a> suggests they have mutations that are better at evading immunity, whether from vaccination or prior infection, and may be more transmissible.</p> <p>Another reason these offshoots could be spreading more rapidly is because human behavior has changed. Travel is reaching pre-pandemic levels, children are back in school and most restrictions -- including masking, social distancing and vaccinations requirements -- have ended.</p>

There is some good news. Since September, bivalent boosters that target BA.4 and BA.5 have been approved in the U.S. for those aged 12 and older and for those [aged 5 and older](#) since last week. [Early data](#) suggests the booster increases antibody response.

Because these subvariants are related to BA.4 and BA.5, it's likely that the booster will provide at least some protection against them as well.

"I think there's a very reasonable expectation that the vaccines, especially with the new boosters, will provide good protection," said Brownstein. "But we're still missing a lot of real-world data, especially given that these new sort of omicron variants of BA.5 and BA.4 are starting to take hold in various parts of the world."

"We'll hopefully have reasonable insight from other countries that will help inform some of the forecast for the coming months, but that data is still being compiled," he continued.

Chin-Hong said it's also reasonable to expect, as with previous variants, that those most at risk are Americans with the least amount of protection.

"For people who are unvaccinated, those over age 65 who've never gotten a booster, or people who are immunocompromised, they may become more seriously ill and die if they don't protect themselves," Chin-Hong said.

#### **Should we be concerned?**

Brownstein said he thinks public health officials should remain vigilant and keep tracking the spread of these subvariants but the public should not yet worry.

"I think it's too early to tell the level of concern," Brownstein said. "Of course, everyone should be concerned about how new variants emerge, especially when there's uneven vaccination across the U.S and then across the globe."

He added, "The brunt of that concern should be on public health and scientists right now, as we try to work out [what's happening]."

Brownstein said Americans should be willing to modify their behavior -- like masking indoors again -- if cases spike or a new variant emerges.

According to CDC data, the [daily average of COVID-19 cases](#) sits at 35,000 as Oct.16 and the average estimate of [new hospital admissions](#) is 2,990 as of Oct. 15.

Brownstein said if the health care system becomes overwhelmed by a surge, city- or state-level officials might consider masking to reduce the number of patients entering hospitals.

"I think that clearly targeted masking, especially in high-risk places like health care settings and long-term care facilities, will be critical, because those places are charged with protecting the most vulnerable," Brownstein said. "Beyond that, I think it's going to be really driven by local level cases."

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HEADLINE	10/17 Officials worry: homegrown election threats
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-security-officials-worry-about-homegrown-election-threats-2022-10-17/">https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-security-officials-worry-about-homegrown-election-threats-2022-10-17/</a>
GIST	SAN FRANCISCO/WASHINGTON, Oct 17 (Reuters) - Domestic disinformation campaigns and homegrown threats to poll workers are emerging as bigger concerns ahead of the Nov. 8 U.S. <a href="#">congressional elections</a> than foreign interference, according to U.S. cybersecurity and law enforcement officials.

Russia and Iran, accused of meddling in past U.S. elections using disinformation campaigns, are enmeshed in their own crises - the [Russian invasion](#) of Ukraine and Iranian [mass protests](#) - and have not yet been found to have targeted this election, said two senior U.S. officials, speaking on condition of anonymity.

According to information disclosed as part of criminal cases, Russian and Iranian intelligence units deployed hackers and fake social media accounts in recent U.S. elections to try to influence the vote and sow discord.

Election integrity has been a contentious issue in the United States, particularly in the aftermath of the 2020 presidential election. Republican former President Donald Trump continues to make false claims that the election was stolen from him by Democrat Joe Biden through widespread voting fraud.

"At this time, we are not aware of any specific or credible threats to compromise or disrupt election infrastructure," top U.S. cybersecurity official Jen Easterly told reporters last week during a video conference on election security.

"That said, the current election threat environment is more complex than it has ever been," added Easterly, who heads the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).

Republicans are aiming to win back control of the Senate and House of Representatives from Biden's fellow Democrats in the midterm elections, a development that would imperil major parts of his legislative agenda.

Since 2020, there have been numerous reported incidents of poll workers being threatened, harassed or assaulted by Trump supporters, as [detailed by Reuters](#). Opinion polls have shown that a large majority of Republican voters believe Trump won that election.

"There is a lot of rhetoric about violence against poll workers," said one of the U.S. officials, who is involved in efforts to prevent the spread of election-related disinformation. "So we have made it a point ... to aggressively investigate all of those threats."

The official noted that the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment safeguard for free speech would protect certain types of comments.

"First Amendment-protected is, 'Oh, I wish so-and-so can die.' However, if you say, 'I'm going to come to his house and kill so-and-so,' then we can open an investigation. Even though it's a small minority of people who are putting out all of this type of language, it gets amplified on social media. So I would say that is kind of my biggest concern," the official added.

The Election Integrity Partnership, a non-partisan group that has helped the CISA combat election disinformation, said the vast majority of disinformation and false rumors about the 2020 election spread primarily through far-right influencers catering to Trump voters.

#### 'TROUBLING CHANGES'

"One of the most troubling changes since 2020 is how widespread disinformation about the election has become," said Edward Perez, an expert in election infrastructure policy and technology at the California-based election research group OSET, who has also worked at Twitter.

"Past efforts by foreign actors to sow division in the U.S. appear to be bearing fruit because now much of the work of spreading falsehoods that undermine public confidence in elections is being carried out by domestic actors," Perez added.

U.S. officials have found that Russia interfered in the 2016 U.S. election with a campaign of hacking and propaganda intended to sow strife in the United States, harm Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton and boost Trump's chances, with a number of Russian individuals and companies facing criminal charges.

	<p>In July of this year, U.S. prosecutors <a href="#">charged</a> a Russian man with orchestrating a multi-year effort to use political groups in Florida, Georgia and California to cause discord, spread Russian propaganda or interfere in American elections.</p> <p>The two U.S. officials who described to Reuters the current election-related threats said they were not aware of any ongoing foreign information operations aimed at misleading Americans about the voting process.</p> <p>U.S. government agencies, including the CISA and the FBI, have been collaborating with social media companies including Twitter and Meta Platforms Inc, the Facebook and Instagram parent company, to clamp down on election-related disinformation arising from domestic sources.</p> <p>A Twitter spokesperson, who asked not to be named, said the company has taken steps to prevent foreign interference and domestic "information operations," or disinformation campaigns.</p> <p>"The growing threats posed by malicious actors need to be addressed holistically," the spokesperson added, "which is why we regularly engage outside experts, as well as law enforcement, to improve our understanding of the actors involved and to develop a collaborative strategy."</p> <p>Meta spokesperson Corey Chambliss declined to comment on the company's election security efforts.</p>
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## Cyber, Tech Awareness

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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Hack disrupts Bulgarian govt. websites</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://therecord.media/cyberattack-disrupts-bulgarian-government-websites-over-betrayal-to-russia/">https://therecord.media/cyberattack-disrupts-bulgarian-government-websites-over-betrayal-to-russia/</a>
GIST	<p>Pro-Russian hackers were behind a “large-scale” cyberattack on Bulgarian government websites on Saturday, according to Bulgaria’s Prosecutor-General <a href="#">Ivan Geshev</a>.</p> <p>The distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attack briefly took down the websites of the presidential administration, the Defense Ministry, the Interior Ministry, the Justice Ministry, and the Constitutional Court.</p> <p>After access was restored, the sites were running slower than usual, according to the local Bulgarian online publication <a href="#">Dnevnik</a>.</p> <p>The pro-Russian hacking group Killnet claimed responsibility for the attack, saying it was a punishment “for betrayal to Russia and the supply of weapons to Ukraine.”</p> <p>“The government of Bulgaria is sentenced to network collapse and shame,” Killnet <a href="#">wrote</a> on its official group on Telegram.</p> <p>The attack is just the latest in a string of high-profile Killnet DDoS campaigns, which knock websites offline by flooding them with junk traffic. The attacks have made websites temporarily unavailable, but have not done serious damage.</p> <p>The group’s main goal, according to <a href="#">experts</a>, is to attract the attention of the media and undermine confidence in state institutions.</p> <p>Killnet has been active since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It previously targeted dozens of government networks across Europe in countries including Romania, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Finland, and Latvia.</p>

Although the attack did not have serious consequences and no sensitive data was leaked, it provoked a strong reaction from Bulgarian government officials. Geshev called it “a serious problem” and “an attack on the Bulgarian state.”

### **Hacker allegedly identified**

Bulgarian Deputy Chief Prosecutor [Borislav Sarafov](#) said that the country’s cybersecurity agency has identified the name and the address of one of the hackers who carried out the attack. According to an investigation, the hacker is based in the Russian city of Magnitogorsk.

Bulgaria intends to request the extradition of this hacker from Russia, according to Sarafov, but the chance that the Kremlin will cooperate is very low, he said.

Killnet is most likely controlled by Russian intelligence agencies, according to [Yavor Kolev](#), a Bulgarian cybersecurity expert.

“In a totalitarian state, such a group cannot act independently. It performs the tasks assigned to it,” he said. Killnet usually attacks countries that actively support Ukraine. Bulgaria, however, has historically close ties to Russia and doesn’t support Ukraine’s attempts to become a member of NATO.

During the war, Bulgaria has provided asylum to Ukrainian refugees, sent humanitarian aid to Ukraine, and repaired Ukraine’s heavy weapons.

Contrary to Killnet’s claims, Bulgaria [refused](#) to send its own weaponry to the Ukrainian army, citing a need for its own defense.

One of the reasons for Killnet’s attack, according to Kolev, could be Bulgaria’s active involvement in the political arena. “Killnet has attacked more than 50 countries,” he said. “Bulgaria’s turn has come.”

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HEADLINE	<b>10/19 Warning: stealthy PowerShell backdoor</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://thehackernews.com/2022/10/experts-warn-of-stealthy-powershell.html">https://thehackernews.com/2022/10/experts-warn-of-stealthy-powershell.html</a>
GIST	<p>Details have emerged about a previously undocumented and fully undetectable (FUD) PowerShell backdoor that gains its stealth by disguising itself as part of a Windows update process.</p> <p>"The covert self-developed tool and the associated C2 commands seem to be the work of a sophisticated, unknown threat actor who has targeted approximately 100 victims," Tomer Bar, director of security research at SafeBreach, <a href="#">said</a> in a new report.</p> <p>Attributed to an <a href="#">unnamed threat actor</a>, attack chains involving the malware commence with a weaponized <a href="#">Microsoft Word document</a> that, per the company, was uploaded from Jordan on August 25, 2022.</p> <p>Metadata associated with the lure document indicates that the initial intrusion vector is a LinkedIn-based spear-phishing attack, which ultimately leads to the execution of a PowerShell script via a piece of embedded macro code.</p> <p>The PowerShell script (<a href="#">Script1.ps1</a>) is designed to connect to a remote command-and-control (C2) server and retrieve a command to be launched on the compromised machine by means of a second PowerShell script (<a href="#">temp.ps1</a>).</p> <p>But an operational security error made by the actor by using a trivial incremental identifier to uniquely identify each victim (i.e., 0, 1, 2, etc.) allowed for reconstructing the commands issued by the C2 server.</p> <p>Some of the notable commands issued consist of exfiltrating the list of running processes, enumerating files in specific folders, launching whoami, and deleting files under the public user folders.</p>

	<p>As of writing, 32 security vendors and 18 anti-malware engines flag the decoy document and the PowerShell scripts as malicious, respectively.</p> <p>The findings come as Microsoft has <a href="#">taken steps</a> to block Excel 4.0 (XLM or XL4) and Visual Basic for Applications (VBA) macros by default across Office apps, prompting threat actors to pivot to <a href="#">alternative delivery methods</a>.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Cybersecurity vendors pushing snake oil?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.securityweek.com/are-cybersecurity-vendors-pushing-snake-oil">https://www.securityweek.com/are-cybersecurity-vendors-pushing-snake-oil</a>
GIST	<p>The availability of new security products increases, the amount of budget spent on cybersecurity grows, and the number of security breaches seems to outpace both. This basic lack of correlation between increasing cybersecurity spend and any clear increase in cybersecurity effectiveness is the subject of a new analytical survey from Egress.</p> <p>With 52 million data breaches in Q2 2022 alone (Statista), Egress questioned 800 cybersecurity and IT leaders on why vendor claims and reality aren't aligned. The headline response in the survey is that 91% of decision makers have difficulty in selecting cybersecurity vendors due to unclear marketing about their specific offerings.</p> <p>The financial investment cycle doesn't help in this. For many investors, the strength of the management team is more important than the product. The argument is not whether this product is a cybersecurity silver bullet, but whether this management can take the company to a point where it can exit with serious profits.</p> <p>If investment is achieved, much of it will go into marketing. That marketing must compete against existing, established vendors – so it tends to be louder, more aggressive, and replete with hyperbole. Marketing noise can lead to increased valuation, which can lead to a successful and profitable exit by the investors.</p> <p>Of course, this is an oversimplification and doesn't always happen. The point, however, is that it does happen and has no relevance to the real effectiveness of the product in question. Without any doubt, there are many products that have been over-hyped by marketing funds provided by profit-driven investors.</p> <p>An example of hype in practice can be seen in the early <a href="#">'wars'</a> between what was labeled as next-gen AI-based anti-malware products vs traditional signature-based anti-virus products. In reality, next-gens still needed to use signatures, while traditional products had already been using AI for almost a decade.</p> <p>However, the new aggressive marketing brought AI into the spotlight, and introduced a host of new problems: increased false positives, alert fatigue among staff and the need for more and very expensive threat analysts. But to what effect? More staffing, increased spending on the new products, greater complexity in the security stack – and no overall diminution of breaches.</p> <p>Security awareness training is another example of marketing hype leading to unrealistic expectations of improved security. Ninety-six percent of the respondents believe training can make long-term, positive changes to employees' behavior – but reality suggests otherwise.</p> <p>All 'official' advice is that awareness training is an essential part of security. And most awareness training products can demonstrate that their services can bring a customer's phishing failures down from, say, 50% to 10%. This sounds like a win until you remember that just a single fail can lead to disaster. And again, no amount of spend on awareness training has had any serious effect on the number of breaches that start from phishing.</p> <p>There is another factor that should be considered – the effect of security regulations. Breaches and consequent regulatory fines occur. But GDPR fines, for example, are reduced if the breached company can</p>



demonstrate it took serious and realistic efforts to prevent theft of data. If this happens, security defenses do not protect companies from hackers, but do protect the company from the worst effects of non-compliance.

[Cyberinsurance](#) is beginning to have a similar effect, where companies are required to install certain defenses, but are driven to do so not because they choose to, but because they are required to do this for insurance purposes. This demand from the insurance industry is likely to increase in future years.

The implication is that increased use of the latest security products has a recognizable value that is not directly related to efficiency. It is this combination of not seeing through marketing hype, conformance to official recommendations and the need to tick regulatory and insurance boxes that leads to confusion in what is bought, why it is bought, what it can achieve, and how it fits into the overall security posture. The result is clearly delineated in the Egress survey.

Forty-nine percent of respondents ([report PDF](#)) feel their security stack is overly complex, while 48% consider it difficult to manage. Forty-nine percent say they suffer from [vendor sprawl](#) leading to an increased attack surface. Security products suffer from bugs and vulnerabilities just like any other software.

New technologies are difficult to understand and difficult to use efficiently. Seventy-seven percent of the IT leaders are using products that employ artificial intelligence; but only 66% claim to understand how this AI makes their security more effective.

Tony Pepper, CEO and co-founder of Egress, believes the security vendors sometimes take advantage of the market conditions to sell what amounts to snake oil. "The industry is a crowded hotbed of start-ups and established players innovating in the same spaces, and constantly trying to both align and differentiate themselves from each other. In all the noise of category creation, product launches, buzz words, and acronyms, cyber security buyers continue to invest in mechanisms to reduce risk - but the reality of these investments is often very different from initial expectations."

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HEADLINE	10/19 Software supply chain attacks soar
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/software-supply-chain-attacks-soar/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/software-supply-chain-attacks-soar/</a>
GIST	<p>Experts have uncovered 88,000 malicious open source packages so far this year, a triple-digit increase on the same figure in 2019 and indicative of a fast-growing corporate attack surface.</p> <p>The figures come from <a href="#">Sonatype</a>'s eighth annual <i>State of the Software Supply Chain report</i>, which was compiled from public and proprietary data analysis, including 131 billion Maven Central downloads and thousands of open source projects.</p> <p>It details the growing risk to corporate systems from both malicious packages inserted into repositories by threat actors, and accidental vulnerabilities that are unwittingly downloaded by DevOps teams.</p> <p>The surge in malicious activity is testament to the growing use of open source packages by these teams to speed time-to-market. Sonatype estimated that open source requests would exceed three trillion this year.</p> <p>The sheer scale of open source consumption and the extra complexity introduced by software dependencies can mean threats and vulnerabilities are missed by developers, the vendor argued.</p> <p>It claimed that the average Java application now contains 148 dependencies – 20 more than last year. With the average Java project updating 10 times a year, developers must track intelligence on nearly 1500 dependency changes annually for each application they work on, Sonatype estimated.</p> <p>However, visibility into these development environments appears to be lacking: transitive dependencies accounted for six out of every seven bugs affecting open source projects over the past year, it claimed.</p>

Overall, 96% of open source Java downloads containing known vulnerabilities could have been avoided, because a better version was available but for some reason wasn't used, the report noted.

Unfortunately, many organizations appear to be operating under a false sense of security.

The report revealed that 68% of survey respondents were confident that their applications are not using vulnerable libraries. However, a random sample of enterprise applications showed that 68% contained known vulnerabilities.

"Immature organizations expect their developers to stay on top of license compliance concerns, multiple project releases, dependency changes, and open source ecosystem knowledge along with their regular job responsibilities. This is in addition to external pressures like speed," explained Sonatype CTO, Brian Fox.

"It comes as no surprise that job satisfaction is heavily linked to software supply chain practices maturity. This sobering reality demonstrates the immediate need for organizations to prioritize software supply management so that they can better deal with security risk, increase developer efficiency, and enable faster innovation."

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HEADLINE	10/19 Deadbolt extorts vendors, customers
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/deadbolt-ransomware-extorts/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/deadbolt-ransomware-extorts/</a>
GIST	<p>A prolific ransomware group targeting network-attached storage (NAS) devices this year monetizes its efforts by extorting both vendors and their end customers, according to a new report.</p> <p><a href="#">Group-IB's study</a>, <i>Deadbolt ransomware: nothing but NAS</i>, is based on its analysis of a sample of the malware, which first appeared at the start of the year.</p> <p>In an <a href="#">ongoing campaign</a>, it has targeted NAS devices from Taiwanese vendor QNAP belonging to SMBs, schools, individual home users and others using zero-day vulnerabilities as an initial access/attack vector.</p> <p>Group-IB claimed the threat actors operate globally without discrimination, demanding between 0.03 and 0.05 bitcoin (less than \$1000) from end users for a decryption key.</p> <p>However, unusually for ransomware, the group also seeks to extort the NAS vendors themselves.</p> <p>"For a ransom of 10 BTC (\$192,000), the threat actors promised the NAS vendor, QNAP, that they would share all the technical details relating to the zero-day vulnerability that they manipulated, and for 50 BTC (\$959,000) they offered to include the master key to decrypt the files belonging to the vendor's clients who had fallen victim to the campaign," the report explained.</p> <p>It doesn't appear as if these efforts to target QNAP have succeeded thus far. <a href="#">A report from last month</a> claimed that Deadbolt infections surged 674% between June and September.</p> <p>A majority of these infections were found in the US, with 2472 hosts showing signs of Deadbolt, followed by Germany (1778), and Italy (1383).</p> <p>However, there has been some success in the fight against Deadbolt. Last Friday, <a href="#">Dutch cyber police managed to obtain</a> more than 150 decryption keys for the ransomware by tricking its operators.</p> <p>The cops paid via bitcoin, received the keys and then promptly withdrew their payment, leaving them with working decryption keys for 150 victims.</p>

	Unlike most ransomware variants today, Deadbolt does not steal data for double extortion purposes – nor do the operators interact with their victims. Once a payment is made to the group, the victim automatically receives the decryption key in the transaction details, Group-IB explained.
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HEADLINE	<b>10/19 Digital natives undercut corporate security</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/digital-natives-undermining/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/digital-natives-undermining/</a>
GIST	<p>Millennial and Gen Z employees are far more likely than their older colleagues to disregard security best practices, marking them out as a potentially serious insider threat, according to EY.</p> <p>The global consulting giant polled 1000 US employees about their cybersecurity awareness and practices to compile its 2022 <i>EY Human Risk in Cybersecurity Survey</i>.</p> <p>It found that three-quarters (76%) of respondents across all generations now consider themselves knowledgeable about cybersecurity.</p> <p>However, so-called “digital natives” were more likely to engage in risky behavior. Around half (48%) of Gen Z and two-fifths (39%) of millennial respondents admitted taking cybersecurity protection on their personal devices more seriously than on their work devices.</p> <p>In addition, 58% of Gen Z and 42% of millennials interviewed said they’d disregard mandatory updates for as long as possible, versus 31% of Gen X and 15% of baby boomers polled.</p> <p>Younger employees were also more likely to use the same password for a professional and personal account, and more likely to accept web browser cookies on their work-issued devices all the time or often, the report found.</p> <p>Tapan Shah, EY Americas consulting cybersecurity leader, <a href="#">argued the findings</a> should be a “wake-up call” for security leaders, given that most incidents can be traced back to a negligent individual.</p> <p>“There is an immediate need for organizations to restructure their security strategy with human behavior at the core,” he added.</p> <p>“Human risk must be at the top of the security agenda, with a focus on understanding employee behaviors and then building proactive cybersecurity systems and a culture that educates, engages and rewards everyone in the enterprise.”</p> <p>Unfortunately, there still appears to be some way to go in achieving this. Nearly a fifth (16%) of respondents admitted that if they encountered a suspected security breach, they’d try to handle the situation themselves rather than immediately informing the IT department or a supervisor.</p> <p>The need for improved security awareness training is made more urgent by the changing nature of the workplace, with employees spending more time working from home.</p> <p><a href="#">According to Proofpoint</a>, 67% of companies experienced between 21 and more than 40 “insider incidents” in 2021, up from 60% in 2020. These threats cost global organizations an average of over \$15m to remediate last year, it added.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Hackers target online Asian casinos</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hackers-target-asian-casinos-in-lengthy-cyberespionage-campaign/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hackers-target-asian-casinos-in-lengthy-cyberespionage-campaign/</a>
GIST	A hacking group named ‘DiceyF’ has been observed deploying a malicious attack framework against online casinos based in Southeast Asia since at least November 2021.

According to a new report by Kaspersky, the DiceyF APT group does not appear to be targeting financial gains from the casinos but instead conducting stealthy cyberespionage and intellectual property theft.

The DiceyF activity aligns with “[Operation Earth Berberoka](#)” reported by Trend Micro in March 2022, both pointing to the threat actors being of Chinese origin.

### **Targeting casinos**

The attack framework used by the APT is named ‘GamePlayerFramework’, and is a C# rewrite of the C++ malware ‘PuppetLoader.’

The framework features payload downloaders, malware launchers, plugins, remote access modules, keyloggers, clipboard stealers, and more.

The most recent executables sampled by Kaspersky are 64-bit .NET files, but there are also 32-bit executables and DLLs in circulation.

The framework maintains two branches, namely “Tifa” and “Yuna,” which are developed separately and feature different levels of sophistication and complexity. “Yuna” is the more sophisticated of the two, also observed in the wild later.

After the framework is loaded on the target’s machine, it connects to the C2 server and sends XOR-encrypted heartbeat packets every 20 seconds, containing the victim’s username, user session status, size of collected logs, and current date and time.

The C2 can respond with a set of 15 commands that may order the framework to collect additional data, execute a command on “cmd.exe”, update the C2 configuration, and download a new plugin.

Any plugins downloaded from the C2 are loaded directly into the framework without touching the disk to minimize the likelihood of detection.

Their functions include stealing cookies from Chrome or Firefox, snatching clipboard contents, establishing virtual desktop sessions, snapping screenshots, performing port forwarding, and more.

### **Fake Mango app**

Kaspersky has also discovered that DiceyF is using a GUI app that mimics a Mango Employee Data Synchronizer, which drops Yuna downloaders within the organization’s network.

The fake Mango app reaches employees of the casino firms as an installer of a security app, likely sent by the threat actors via phishing emails.

The fake app uses social engineering tactics like displaying the floor where the target organization’s IT department is housed to give the victim the illusion of legitimacy.

The app connects to the same C2 infrastructure as the GamePlayerFramework, and exfiltrates OS, system, network data, and Mango messenger data.

“The code is under continuous incremental change, and its versioning reflects a semi-professional management of the codebase modifications,” [explains Kaspersky](#).

“Over time, the group added Newtonsoft JSON library support, enhanced logging, and encryption for logging.”

Kaspersky comments that using a visible window doesn’t make it suitable only for tricking employees but also good against AVs, which generally treat GUI-based tools with less suspicion.

	<p>To make the tool even stealthier against security tools, the threat actors have signed it with a stolen valid digital certificate, the same one used for the framework too.</p> <p>In conclusion, DiceyF has demonstrated excellent technical capacity to adjust its tools to the oddities of each victim, transforming its codebase over time as the intrusion progresses.</p> <p>While these attacks are not as sophisticated or effective as actual supply chain breaches, they can still be tough to detect and stop, especially when they target multiple employees in an organization.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Scammers to target student loan relief?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/fbi-scammers-likely-to-target-us-student-loan-debt-relief-applicants/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/fbi-scammers-likely-to-target-us-student-loan-debt-relief-applicants/</a>
GIST	<p>The FBI has released a warning that scammers may be targeting individuals seeking to enroll in the Federal Student Aid program to steal their personal information, payment details, and money.</p> <p>Federal Student Aid is <a href="#">a debt relief program</a> announced in August 2022 that opened for applications yesterday. Its goal is to help student loan recipients manage their debt by wiping between \$10,000 and \$20,000 from the credit, depending on whether they are Pell Grant recipients.</p> <p>Eligible individuals must have an income below \$125,000 or a total of \$250,000 for joint filers, and the deadline for application is December 31, 2023.</p> <p>The program represents an opportunity for scammers to set up fraudulent websites that mimic the application form, send "benefit eligibility" phishing emails or SMS, and try multiple fraud channels against people.</p> <p>"Cybercriminals and fraudsters may purport to offer entrance into the Federal Student Loan Forgiveness program, contacting potential victims via phone, email, mail, text, websites, or other online chat services" - the <a href="#">Federal Bureau of Investigation</a>.</p> <p>"Cybercriminals and fraudsters use their schemes to receive payment for services they will not provide or collect victim information they can then use to facilitate a variety of other crimes," the agency added.</p> <p>There's an <a href="#">estimate of 45 million</a> of student loan borrowers in the United States, collectively owing \$1.6 trillion.</p> <p>Applying for the real federal student aid program is free of charge, so potential targets should pay attention to any requests to pay for enrolling in the program or for processing the application.</p> <p>Furthermore, the real application process does not require users to log into any accounts, nor does it ask individuals to upload any documents, personal or financial, during the first phase of the application.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requests for additional information and documents will come during the next stage, and beneficiaries will be contacted from these email addresses: noreply@studentaid.gov</li> <li>• noreply@debtrelief.studentaid.gov</li> <li>• ed.gov@public.govdelivery.com</li> </ul> <p>Finally, the U.S. government will not distribute notices to program beneficiaries, so any emails, phone calls, or SMS messages pointing to alleged application forms are attempts to defraud the recipients. The only official way to apply for the debt relief program is to visit <a href="#">studentaid.gov</a>.</p> <p>Borrowers are advised to treat incoming communication cautiously and monitor Federal Student Aid's <a href="#">social media channels</a> for updates about the program and, potentially, timely warnings about fraud.</p>

	The FTC (Federal Trade Commission) has also <a href="#">posted a warning</a> about the same topic yesterday, offering tips on how to stay clear of scams.
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Verizon breach: prepaid customer accounts</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/verizon-notifies-prepaid-customers-their-accounts-were-breached/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/verizon-notifies-prepaid-customers-their-accounts-were-breached/</a>
GIST	<p>Verizon warned an undisclosed number of prepaid customers that attackers gained access to Verizon accounts and used exposed credit card info in SIM swapping attacks.</p> <p>"We determined that between October 6 and October 10, 2022, a third party actor accessed the last four digits of the credit card used to make automatic payments on your account," <a href="#">Verizon said in an alert</a> published this week.</p> <p>"Using the last four digits of that credit card, the third party was able to gain access to your Verizon account and may have processed an unauthorized SIM card change on the prepaid line that received the SMS linking to this notice. If a SIM card change occurred, Verizon has reversed it."</p> <p>Verizon added that it blocked further unauthorized access to its clients' accounts and found no evidence that this malicious activity is still ongoing.</p> <p>The company also reset the Account Security Codes (PINs) for an undisclosed number of customers "in an abundance of caution."</p> <p>According to the notification, the attackers couldn't access the full credit card number or the customers' banking information, financial information, passwords, Social Security numbers, tax IDs, or other personal details since user accounts don't contain this info.</p> <p>However, Verizon said the threat actors could have accessed names, telephone numbers, billing addresses, price plans, and other service-related information on compromised accounts.</p> <p><b>SIM swap attack used to steal crypto</b></p> <p>One of the Verizon customers who received this notice told BleepingComputer that they were the victims of a SIM swap attack more than a week before Verizon alerted customers.</p> <p>"On 10/7 when I was sim-swapped, the attackers breached my email and attempted to access my crypto accounts," they told BleepingComputer.</p> <p>"I suspect they used information from the Coinbase breach to target me but got access due to the exposure of credit card info from Verizon."</p> <p>SIM swapping (aka SIM hijacking, SIM splitting, or SIM jacking) allows criminals to take control of a target's phone number by convincing their mobile carriers to swap the phone number to an attacker-controlled SIM card using social engineering or with the help of bribed employees.</p> <p>While Verizon's notification was published on its website earlier this week to warn customers of these attacks, the telecom giant made sure that search engines won't index the page by adding 'noindex' and 'nofollow' tags to its metadata.</p> <p>"We recently identified possible unauthorized activity involving about 250 prepaid wireless accounts. We secured these accounts and put in place additional measures to protect our customers from further unauthorized access or fraud," a Verizon spokesperson told BleepingComputer.</p>



	<p>"Verizon has notified the impacted customers and advised on additional steps the customers can take to enhance their account security. We take these matters seriously, and continually enhance and evolve our security protocols to keep customer data and accounts secure.</p> <p>"As always, if any customer believes their account was accessed without authorization, they should reach out to us <a href="#">online</a>, in the MyVerizon app, or by calling <a href="tel:888-483-7200">888-483-7200</a>."</p> <p>Customers are advised to <a href="#">set a new Verizon PIN code</a> to secure their Verizon account from future attacks, as well as a <a href="#">new password and secret question</a> to safeguard their My Verizon online accounts.</p> <p>Verizon also allows customers to defend against SIM swapping attacks <a href="#">by enabling the free 'Number Lock' protection feature</a> through the My Verizon app or the My Verizon website.</p> <p>Once the phone number is locked, it can no longer be ported to another line/carrier or swapped to another SIM unless the account owner removes the lock.</p> <p>One year ago, Verizon-owned digital wireless carrier Visible also <a href="#">admitted that some customer accounts were hacked</a> following several days of technical problems.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Online wine seller Vinomofo suffers breach</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.smh.com.au/technology/online-wine-seller-vinomofo-suffers-major-data-breach-20221018-p5bqlf.html?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.smh.com.au/technology/online-wine-seller-vinomofo-suffers-major-data-breach-20221018-p5bqlf.html?&amp;web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>Online wine seller Vinomofo has disclosed a major data breach in which an intruder accessed customers' personal information including names, dates of birth, addresses and contact details.</p> <p>Vinomofo cited privacy and scam protection reasons to justify not disclosing precisely how many people were affected when a hacker accessed real customer data via a test platform, but the company has about 500,000 customers.</p> <p>"I'm definitely going to close my account - the cheap juice ain't worth the squeeze!" said one customer who was informed via email on Tuesday that their data had been disclosed.</p> <p>Major Australian businesses including Woolworths' MyDeal website and health insurer Medibank Private have announced cybersecurity breaches in the weeks since Optus disclosed a hack last month when data on almost 10 million people was stolen.</p> <p>The nature of the Optus hack has not been confirmed and the company has disputed human error was a factor, but the breach was reportedly made possible by a test server with customer data being connected to the internet, which resembles the Vinomofo hack.</p> <p>Vinomofo would not make its chief executive, Paul Edginton, or other senior staff available for comment, but the company provided a written statement.</p> <p>In response to questions about its data storage, a Vinomofo spokesman said it was in the final stages of upgrading its online platform.</p> <p>"Given the scale of this upgrade and in line with industry practice, a customer database was used to critically test the platform," the spokesman said. "This testing platform was not linked to the live Vinomofo website."</p> <p>Vinomofo discovered signs of the breach on September 27, after which it engaged a cybersecurity firm and alerted the government. But a spokesman said it waited to notify customers until the investigation "established unlawful access of a Vinomofo database did occur".</p>

	<p>In emails to customers seen by this masthead, Vinomofa claimed the risk to customers from the exposure of their information was “low”.</p> <p>“Vinomofa does not hold identity or financial data such as passports, driver’s licences or credit cards/bank details,” it said in an online note to customers. Customers’ payment details were held by a “payment system that is provided by our partner financial institutions”, the spokesman said.</p> <p>“While the investigation established no passwords, identity documents or financial information were accessed, the database includes other information about customers and members.”</p> <p>It said names, addresses, emails, gender, phone numbers and dates of birth may have been accessed. The company said it was now contacting customers because it had confirmed data had been accessed.</p> <p>The Vinomofa customer, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of their employment, said they wanted to know when the breach occurred and exactly which data had been taken.</p> <p>But the company’s spokesman said no further information would be released.</p> <p>“In the interests of the privacy of our customers and partners, and to reduce the risk of attempts by scammers to target them, we are not publicly releasing any further details about the incident,” he said.</p> <p>Vinomofa said it had data on customers who had purchased from its online store in accordance with its privacy policy, allowed customers to request their data be deleted and is investigating whether any stolen data has been published online.</p> <p>Customers should be vigilant for scams and do not need to replace any identity documents, Vinomofa said, adding it has engaged the national identity protection service IDCARE.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>10/18 Keystone Health data breach notification</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.securityweek.com/keystone-health-data-breach-impacts-235000-patients?&amp;web_view=true">https://www.securityweek.com/keystone-health-data-breach-impacts-235000-patients?&amp;web_view=true</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Pennsylvania healthcare provider Keystone Health has started informing patients of a data breach potentially impacting their personal information.</p> <p>In a <a href="#">data breach notification</a> published on its website, Keystone is disclosing a cybersecurity incident identified on August 19 and which has resulted in the disruption of some systems.</p> <p>The healthcare provider says it immediately launched an investigation into the incident, which discovered that certain patient information might have been compromised.</p> <p>“Our investigation found that an unauthorized party accessed files within our system between July 28, 2022 and August 19, 2022. Some of those files contained patient information, including names, Social Security numbers, and clinical information,” the data breach notice reads.</p> <p>Keystone says it has already started mailing letters to the affected patients, offering them credit monitoring services.</p> <p>No other information regarding the incident has been provided and it is unclear whether Keystone Health fell victim to ransomware or to a different type of cyberattack.</p> <p>On Friday, Keystone notified the US Department of Health and Human Services that over 235,000 individuals were impacted by the incident.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>10/18 Microsoft lays off employees in slowdown</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/microsoft-lays-off-employees-after-slowdown-in-earnings-growth-11666072959?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos4">https://www.wsj.com/articles/microsoft-lays-off-employees-after-slowdown-in-earnings-growth-11666072959?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos4</a>
GIST	<p><a href="#">Microsoft</a> Corp. laid off more employees this week, becoming the latest tech company to show signs of concern about future demand.</p> <p>In July the software maker said it had <a href="#">plans to cut a number of positions</a>, affecting less than 1% of its total workforce. At the time, Microsoft, which employs more than 200,000 people, said it was making the cuts as a part of a regular adjustment at the start of its fiscal year.</p> <p>On Monday, the company didn't give a figure for the number of layoffs that have started this week and didn't confirm whether they were part of the earlier announced plans. Axios and Insider earlier reported the latest cuts.</p> <p>"Like all companies, we evaluate our business priorities on a regular basis, and make structural adjustments accordingly. We will continue to invest in our business and hire in key growth areas in the year ahead," a Microsoft spokeswoman said.</p> <p>Several tech companies, including <a href="#">Twitter</a> Inc., <a href="#">Netflix</a> Inc. and <a href="#">Uber Technologies</a> Inc., have been adjusting their hiring plans to deal with slowing growth and fallout from other macroeconomic factors. The companies have been cutting back on staff, reducing the size of some teams and freezing hiring.</p> <p>The tech industry has been hiring rapidly for years, but the easy money that fueled years of spending is drying up. The reversal of some pandemic trends, combined with inflation and growing concern that the global economy could be headed toward a recession have cooled parts of the once-hot sector.</p> <p>The Wall Street Journal reported that <a href="#">Meta Platforms</a> Inc. is planning to <a href="#">cut expenses by at least 10%</a> in the coming months, in part through staff reductions, as the social-media <a href="#">giant confronts stalling growth</a> and increased competition, according to people familiar with the company's plans.</p> <p>The Menlo Park, Calif., company <a href="#">has begun nudging out staffers</a> by reorganizing departments and giving affected employees a limited window to apply for other roles within the company, according to current and former managers familiar with the matter.</p> <p>Microsoft's latest move follows some challenges for the company. It <a href="#">suffered its slowest earnings growth</a> in two years in the three months through June, hurt by a sharp slowdown in its cloud business, declining videogame sales and the effects of a strong dollar.</p> <p>After earnings were unveiled in July, Microsoft Chief Financial Officer Amy Hood said the company would "<a href="#">slow the rate of hiring</a> to focus on key growth areas."</p> <p>Microsoft shares have fallen around 30% so far this year, in line with the tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite Index.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Internet freedom up in US, declines globally</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/18/internet-freedom-slightly-us-global-decline-contin/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/oct/18/internet-freedom-slightly-us-global-decline-contin/</a>
GIST	<p>Internet freedom improved slightly in the U.S. for the first time in six years while it continued to decline globally, according to Freedom House's annual assessment of digital liberty published Tuesday.</p> <p>The nonprofit's "Freedom of the Net 2022" report said the U.S. ranked ninth in internet freedom, tied with Australia and France, while China scored the worst of the 70 countries reviewed. Iceland received the report's top score.</p>

America's modest gain during June 2021 to May 2022 time frame may not endure without more action to protect people's digital rights, according to Allie Funk, Freedom House research director for technology and democracy who oversaw the U.S. analysis.

"The improvement is because we did not see a repeat of problematic cases around online surveillance and harassment that we did a few years ago," Ms. Funk said. "Doesn't necessarily mean that has all gone away but it was not a repeat, so we did not see folks moving to encrypted platforms or staying at home out of fear of online surveillance like we saw in 2020."

Freedom House's report graded countries on a 100-point scale with the input of more than 80 analysts and advisers. Countries scored points across three categories: obstacles to access, limits on content and violations of user rights.

The U.S. scored 76, up one point from Freedom House's 2021 report. America's highest marks came in the limits on the content category that involves online censorship.

To assess digital censorship, Freedom House studied eight questions covering everything from people self-censoring to whether a country orders internet service providers to block whole websites or content.

"The government places few restrictions on online content, and existing laws do not allow for broad government blocking of websites or removal of content," the U.S.-specific portion of the study said. "Companies that host user-generated content, many of which are headquartered in the United States, have faced criticism for a lack of transparency and consistency when it comes to enforcing their own content moderation rules."

Despite the high marks from Freedom House on censorship issues, ample evidence demonstrates the Biden administration acted during the report's timeframe to encourage digital censorship.

For example, a White House official asked Facebook in July 2021 to take down an Instagram account that appeared to parody Dr. Anthony Fauci, the leader of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, according to records obtained by Missouri and Louisiana's attorneys general.

The records show a Facebook official agreeing to the request in an email replying to Clarke Humphrey, COVID-19 response digital director at the White House.

The Biden administration's private encouragement of digital censorship is the subject of a lawsuit brought by Missouri Attorney General Eric Schmitt and Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry. The attorneys general made the relevant records public in August and September of 2022.

Ms. Funk said the report did not mention this example because of word limitations, and she noted Democratic and Republican figures have both called for content removals.

"The way we think about it is, 'Is there fairness, is there transparency in this, and is content that is being removed by the platforms, does it abide by human rights standards?'" Ms. Funk said. "And that's not always the case."

The global environment is worse. China scored 10 out of a possible 100 points, and the sharpest decline was witnessed in Russia, followed by Myanmar, Sudan and Libya.

"A record number of national governments blocked websites with nonviolent political, social, or religious content, undermining the rights to free expression and access to information," Freedom House's report said. "A majority of these blocks targeted sources located outside of the country."

Iceland ranked as the top-performing country with a score of 95. Other countries in the top five included Estonia, Costa Rica, Canada, and Taiwan and the United Kingdom tied for fifth.

HEADLINE	10/18 Germany sacks top cybersecurity official
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/19/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#germany-russia-cybersecurity-arne-schoenbohm">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/10/19/world/russia-ukraine-war-news#germany-russia-cybersecurity-arne-schoenbohm</a>
GIST	<p>BERLIN — The German government has removed the official responsible for keeping the country safe from cyberattacks over reports that he kept in touch with a lobbying group that had links to Russian intelligence. The move comes as Russia’s war against Ukraine has increased fears over cybersecurity.</p> <p>The Interior Ministry confirmed on Tuesday the dismissal of Arne Schönbohm, who had led the Federal Office for Information Security since 2016. The allegations of possible ties to Russian intelligence, which were reported this month by a German satirical news show, “have permanently damaged the necessary public trust in the neutrality and impartiality” of Mr. Schönbohm, a spokeswoman for the ministry said.</p> <p>The dismissal comes after ZDF Magazin Royal <a href="#">reported that Mr. Schönbohm kept contact with a lobbying group</a> he had co-founded a decade ago that included at least one Russian cybersecurity firm founded by a Russian intelligence agent as a member even after Russia invaded Ukraine. The group cut ties with the Russian firm three days after the show aired.</p> <p>The show did not link Mr. <a href="#">Schönbohm</a> directly with Russian intelligence, though the current president of the lobbying group acknowledged such contacts.</p> <p>Mr. <a href="#">Schönbohm</a> did not immediately respond to a request for comment, but the German newsweekly Der Spiegel quoted him as saying that he had asked this week for disciplinary proceedings to clear up the issue. The Interior Ministry said that the allegations “would be thoroughly and vigorously investigated” and that he was “presumed innocent.”</p> <p>Mr. Schönbohm’s removal comes amid fears of attacks on German infrastructure. After attacks on the idled gas pipeline connecting Russia and Germany and targeted sabotage of a communication system used by the rail system, the federal police have intensified their focus on infrastructure.</p> <p>There have been several Russian hacks, <a href="#">including one targeting German Parliament in 2015</a>, before the war broke out.</p> <p>Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine has upended a host of German policies, including the prompting of the government to wean itself off Russian energy that gave Russian President Vladimir V. Putin leverage over Europe. Germany long thought that strong trade ties would make it more secure and help its economy, but quickly distanced itself after the invasion.</p> <p>Parliament cut perks for Gerhard Schröder, the country’s leader from 1998 to 2005, after he declined to sever ties to Russian oil and disavow <a href="#">his friendship with Mr. Putin</a>.</p> <p>The invasion has also put pressure on the country’s leaders to increase military spending. While Germany has donated a whole manner of weapons to Ukraine, Chancellor Olaf Scholz has resisted calls to send battle tanks to Ukraine for fear that Germany would be seen as a party to the war, he has said.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/18 VMFH online records nightmare over?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article267482903.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article267482903.html</a>
GIST	<p>Access to online medical records was slowly returning to a local health system’s providers, weeks after a ransomware attack led to systems going offline in early October.</p> <p>The CommonSpirit Health network outage has affected Virginia Mason Franciscan Health medical sites and hospitals, particularly legacy CHI Franciscan sites in Pierce, King and Kitsap counties. Virginia Mason Medical Center in Seattle was largely unaffected, according to the health system.</p>

CommonSpirit Health, in its latest update, said that it was in the process “of restoring those systems that were taken offline.”

It stated that for VMFH sites in the Puget Sound region, providers “are now able to access their patients’ electronic health records.”

It added, “Some system functionality, including patient access to MyChart, is expected to be available in the coming days.”

The MyChart patient portal has been down since Oct. 3, along with medical staff’s access to online patient records.

“We are only taking steps to restore systems when it is safe and secure to do so,” CommonSpirit added.

The receptionist at a VMFH-affiliated medical office in Bremerton told The News Tribune on Tuesday morning the office’s online access was “99 percent back.”

An employee with St. Anthony Hospital in Gig Harbor told The News Tribune via email in response to questions that their online record access returned Sunday night-Monday morning.

MyChart access as of Tuesday morning remained offline, with the link instead going to a CommonSpirit update page about the ransomware attack and how the health care provider was working to bring online access back.

According to an internal update shared by a source with The News Tribune, CommonSpirit Health outlined how widespread the network outage was, stating that “In the Midwest division, we have restored read-only access to our (electronic health records) in our acute care settings.”

It added that “In Tennessee, Georgia and Texas, we have restored read-only access” to the system’s electronic health records.

The system said it was working to expand read-only electronic health record access “throughout our Southeast division.”

Little information is known about the cyberattack, other than a statement issued by CommonSpirit Health last week confirming it was a ransomware attack. Sites operating under the CommonSpirit Health umbrella have reported outages in multiple states.

In the ensuing days and weeks, some patients have faced canceled appointments, rescheduling challenges for appointments, infusions or surgeries, and extended wait times in clinics as staff made their way through paper charting and other workarounds.

Chicago-based CommonSpirit Health formed in 2019 through alignment of Catholic Health Initiatives and Dignity Health. It has become one of the largest nonprofit health systems in the U.S., with more than 1,000 care sites in 21 states, serving 20 million patients, according to its website.

Virginia Mason Franciscan Health, part of the CommonSpirit network, completed the merger of their Seattle and Tacoma-based health systems in January 2021.

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HEADLINE	10/18 Cisco gear shipped to Russia from China
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.marketwatch.com/story/cisco-gear-is-being-shipped-into-russia-from-china-and-other-countries-leaked-customs-database-shows-11666013986">https://www.marketwatch.com/story/cisco-gear-is-being-shipped-into-russia-from-china-and-other-countries-leaked-customs-database-shows-11666013986</a>
GIST	A purportedly leaked Russian customs database shows around 500 shipments of Cisco gear arriving in Russia in August, months after the networking giant halted its business operations in that country.



Information extracted from the database and shared with MarketWatch appears to show that Cisco Systems Inc. products entered Russia from a number of countries, with the majority of shipments coming from China. Other countries of origin include Vietnam, Switzerland, Mexico, Malaysia, Australia, Thailand and Holland, as well as the U.S., according to the data.

In the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February, a host of major U.S. corporations, including Cisco, ended their Russian operations.

On March 3, Cisco announced that it was halting all business operations in Russia as well as Belarus "for the foreseeable future." In a subsequent statement, released on June 23, Cisco announced its decision to begin "an orderly wind-down" of its business in those two countries.

The leaked database appears to show almost 500 shipments of Cisco products coming into Russia in August, ranging in value from less than \$100 to tens of thousands of dollars.

A representative of the Economic Security Council of Ukraine told MarketWatch that the organization was shocked when it saw the shipments detailed in the database. "We were not expecting this type of outcome," the representative said.

"On March 3, 2022, Cisco announced stopping all business operations in Russia and Belarus, including sales and services," a Cisco spokesperson told MarketWatch via email. "This included discontinuing business with all Cisco partners and distributors in Russia and Belarus, which means they can no longer source products via authorized channels.

"On June 23, we announced the decision to begin an orderly wind-down of our business in Russia and Belarus," the Cisco spokesperson added. "Cisco stands by this decision."

The networking company highlighted the challenges posed by so-called grey markets, where products are purchased outside of a manufacturer's authorized distribution channels. "Combatting grey market operations is a challenge facing the entire technology industry. Cisco's Brand Protection team continues to actively counter grey market operators and their activities around the world," the spokesperson said.

"This includes monitoring unusual booking activities and online open-source intelligence and working with customs officials to identify and thwart transactions that infringe Cisco's intellectual property rights," the spokesperson added.

Grey markets have also been historically used as means to distribute counterfeit products. Additionally, given the often murky nature of grey markets, the information associated with cross-border shipments is often incomplete and inaccurate.

The Economic Security Council of Ukraine was set up to develop expertise in identifying and counteracting internal and external threats to Ukraine's economic security. Means of countering Russian aggression include strengthening the Ukrainian army and putting in place "a wide range of measures" to suppress Russia's economy, according to the council's website.

"Our main goal is to deprive Russia of technology and essential supplies that are necessary for its military capabilities and economic livelihood," the council's representative told MarketWatch. "Foreign companies should terminate cooperation with Russia, which is essentially a terrorist state," the representative added.

Corporations' stances regarding Russia have come under close scrutiny since Moscow launched its invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24. Earlier this month, the Moral Rating Agency published a list of companies, both in the U.S. and overseas, that it accuses of "moralwashing," or making confusing statements about their involvement with Russia.

	The agency was set up after the invasion of Ukraine to examine whether companies were carrying out their promises of exiting Russia. Its research includes both U.S. and overseas firms.
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 FBI stumbles in war on cybercrime</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.propublica.org/article/fbi-ransomware-hunting-team-cybercrime">https://www.propublica.org/article/fbi-ransomware-hunting-team-cybercrime</a>
GIST	<p>Investigating cybercrime was supposed to be the FBI's third-highest priority, behind terrorism and counterintelligence. Yet, in 2015, FBI Director James Comey realized that his Cyber Division faced a brain drain that was hamstringing its investigations.</p> <p>Retention in the division had been a chronic problem, but in the spring of that year, it became acute. About a dozen young and midcareer cyber agents had given notice or were considering leaving, attracted by more lucrative jobs outside government. As the resignations piled up, Comey received an unsolicited email from Andre McGregor, one of the cyber agents who had quit. In his email, the young agent suggested ways to improve the Cyber Division. Comey routinely broadcast his open-door policy, but senior staff members were nevertheless aghast when they heard an agent with just six years' experience in the bureau had actually taken him up on it. To their consternation, Comey took McGregor's email and the other cyber agents' departures seriously. "I want to meet these guys," he said. He invited the agents to Washington from field offices nationwide for a private lunch. As news of the meeting circulated throughout headquarters, across divisions and into the field, senior staff openly scorned the cyber agents, dubbing them "the 12 Angry Men," "the Dirty Dozen" or just "these assholes." To the old-schoolers — including some who had risked their lives in service to the bureau — the cyber agents were spoiled prima donnas, not real FBI.</p> <p>The cyber agents were as stunned as anyone to have an audience with Comey. Despite their extensive training in interrogation at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia, many were anxious about what the director might ask them. "As an agent, you never meet the director," said Milan Patel, an agent who attended the lunch. "You know the director, because he's famous. But the director doesn't know you."</p> <p>You also rarely, if ever, go to the J. Edgar Hoover Building's seventh floor, where the executive offices are. But that day, the cyber agents — all men, mostly in their mid-30s, in suits, ties and fresh haircuts — strode single file down the seventh-floor hall to Comey's private conference room. Stiffly, nervously, they stood waiting. Then Comey came in, shirt sleeves rolled up and bag lunch in hand.</p> <p>"Have a seat, guys," he told them. "Take off your coats. Get comfortable. Tell me who you are, where you live and why you're leaving. I want to understand if you are happy and leaving, or disappointed and leaving."</p> <p>Around the room, everyone took a turn answering. Each agent professed to be happy, describing his admiration for the bureau's mission.</p> <p>"Well, that's a good start," Comey said.</p> <p>Then sincerity prevailed. For the next hour, as they ate their lunches, the agents unloaded.</p> <p>They told Comey that their skills were either disregarded or misunderstood by other agents and supervisors across the bureau. The FBI had cliques reminiscent of high school, and the cyber agents were derisively called the Geek Squad.</p> <p>"What do you need a gun for?" SWAT team jocks would say. Or, from a senior leader, alluding to the physical fitness tests all agents were required to pass, "Do you have to do pushups with a keyboard in your backpack?" The jabs — which eroded an already tenuous sense of belonging — testified to the widespread belief that cyber agents played a less important role than others in the bureau.</p> <p>At the meeting, the men also registered their opposition to some of the FBI's ingrained cultural expectations, including the mantra that agents should be capable of doing "any job, anywhere." Comey</p>

had embraced that credo, making it known during his tenure that he wanted everyone in the FBI to have computer skills. But the cyber agents believed this outlook was misguided. Although traditional skills, from source cultivation to undercover stings, were applicable to cybercrime cases, it was not feasible to turn someone with no interest or aptitude in computer science into a first-rate cyber investigator. The placement of nontechnical agents on cyber squads — a practice that dated to the 1990s — also led to a problem that the agents referred to as “reeducation fatigue.” They were constantly forced to put their investigations on hold to train newcomers, both supervisors and other cyber agents, who arrived with little or no technical expertise.

Other issues were personal. To be promoted, the FBI typically required agents to relocate. This transient lifestyle caused family heartache for agents across the bureau. One cyber agent lamented the lack of career opportunities for his spouse, a businesswoman, in far-flung offices like Wichita. The agents told Comey they didn’t have to deal with “the shuffle” around the country for professional advancement because their skills were immediately transferable to the private sector and in high demand. They had offers for high-profile jobs paying multiples of their FBI salaries. Unlike private employers worried about staying competitive, the FBI wasn’t about to disrupt its rigid pay scale to keep its top cyber agents. Feeling they had nothing to lose, the agents recommended changes. They told Comey that the FBI could improve retention by centralizing cyber agents in Washington instead of assigning them to the 56 field offices around the country. That made sense because, unlike investigating physical crimes like bank robbery, they didn’t necessarily need to be near the scene to collect evidence. Plus, suspects were often abroad.

Most important, they wanted the bureau’s respect.

Comey listened, asked questions and took notes. Then he led them to his private office. They glanced around, most of them knowing they were unlikely to be granted such access to power again. Comey’s desk featured framed photos of his wife and children, and the carpet was emblazoned with the FBI’s seal. The agents had such respect for the bureau that they huddled close so that no one had to step on any part of the seal.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the office was the whiteboard that sprawled across one of the walls. On it was an organizational chart of the bureau’s leadership with magnets featuring the names and headshots of FBI executives and special agents in charge of field offices. Many were terrorism experts who had risen through the hierarchy in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Comey was sympathetic to his visitors and recognized the importance of cyber expertise to the FBI’s future. At the same time, he wasn’t going to overhaul the bureau and alienate the powerful old guard to please a group of short-timers.

“Look, I know we’ve got a problem with leadership here,” Comey told the cyber agents as they studied the whiteboard, according to agents who were there. “I want to fix it, but I don’t have enough time to fix it. I’m only here for a limited amount of time; it’s going to take another generation to fix some of these cultural issues.” But the agents knew the FBI couldn’t afford to wait another generation to confront escalating cyberthreats like ransomware. Ransomware is the unholy marriage of hacking and cryptography. Typically, the attackers capitalize on a cybersecurity flaw or get an unsuspecting person to open an attachment or click a link. Once inside a computer system, ransomware encrypts the files, rendering them inaccessible without the right decryption key — the string of characters that can unlock the information — for which a ransom is demanded.

Although attacks were becoming more sophisticated, bureau officials told counterparts in the Department of Homeland Security and elsewhere in the federal government that ransomware wasn’t a priority because both the damages and the chances of catching suspects were too small. Instead of aggressively mobilizing against the threat, the FBI took the lead in compiling a “best practices” document that warned the public about ransomware, urged prevention and discouraged payments to hackers. Through an intermediary, Comey, fired from his FBI position by then-President Donald Trump in 2017, declined to comment on the meeting. The FBI acknowledged but did not respond to written questions.

To FBI leadership, ransomware was an “ankle-biter crime,” said an agent who attended the meeting with Comey.

“They viewed it as a Geek Squad thing, and therefore they viewed it as not important,” he said.

Many of the issues the FBI cyber agents raised during their meeting with Comey were nothing new. In fact, the bureau’s inertia in tackling cybercrime dated all the way back to a case involving the first documented state-sponsored computer intrusion.

In 1986, Cliff Stoll was working as a systems administrator at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory when his boss asked him to resolve a 75-cent shortfall in the accounting system the lab used for charging for computing power. Stoll traced the error to an unauthorized user and ultimately unraveled a sprawling intrusion into computer systems of the U.S. government and military. Eventually, the trail led to German hackers paid by the Soviet Union’s intelligence service, the KGB. Stoll immortalized his crusade in the 1989 book “The Cuckoo’s Egg.” In the course of his investigation, he tried seven times to get the attention of the FBI but was rebuffed each time.

“Look, kid, did you lose more than a half million dollars?” the FBI asked him.

“Uh, no,” Stoll replied.

“Any classified information?”

“Uh, no.”

“Then go away, kid.”

Stoll later spoke with an Air Force investigator who summed up the FBI’s position: “Computer crimes aren’t easy — not like kidnapping or bank robbery, where there’s witnesses and obvious losses. Don’t blame them for shying away from a tough case with no clear solution.”

It wasn’t until almost a decade later that the federal government took its first significant step to organize against cyberthreats. After the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, the Clinton administration called together a dozen officials from across the government to assess the vulnerability of the nation’s critical infrastructure. Since essential services such as health care and banking were moving online, the committee quickly turned its attention from physical threats, like Timothy McVeigh’s infamous Ryder truck, to computer-based ones.

The group helped establish what became known as the National Infrastructure Protection Center in 1998. With representatives from the FBI, the Secret Service, intelligence agencies and other federal departments, the NIPC was tasked with preventing and investigating computer intrusions. The FBI was selected to oversee the NIPC because it had the broadest legal authority to investigate crime.

Turf battles broke out immediately. The National Security Agency and the Pentagon were indignant about reporting to the FBI about sophisticated computer crimes that they believed the bureau was incapable of handling, said Michael Vatis, then a deputy U.S. attorney general who led the effort to launch the center.

“They said: ‘Oh, no, no, no. It can’t be the FBI,’” Vatis recalled. “‘All they know how to do is surround a crime scene with yellow tape and take down bad guys. And they’re notorious for not sharing information.’”

Meanwhile, infighting over resources roiled the FBI. “You had a lot of old-line people arguing about whether cybercrime was real and serious,” Vatis said. “People who came up through organized crime, or Russian counterintelligence. They were like: ‘This is just a nuisance from teenagers. It’s not real.’”

At the time, only a couple of dozen FBI agents had any experience or interest in investigating computer crime. There weren't nearly enough tech-literate agents to fill the scores of new job openings in the NIPC. Needing warm bodies, the FBI summoned volunteers from within its ranks, regardless of background. Among them was the New Orleans-based agent Stacy Arruda. During her first squad meeting in 1999, as her supervisor talked about "Unix this, and Linux that," she realized she was in over her head.

"Arruda, do you have any idea what I'm talking about?" the supervisor asked her.

"Nope."

"Why are you nodding and smiling?"

"I don't want to look stupid."

It was an easy admission because most of the new NIPC agents were similarly uninformed about the world they would be investigating.

When the bureau ran out of volunteers to join the NIPC, agents were "volun-told" to join, Arruda said. That's what happened to Scott Augenbaum. He said he was assigned to the NIPC because he was the only agent in his Syracuse, New York, office "who had any bit of a technology background," meaning he "could take a laptop connected to a telephone jack and get online." He was disappointed by the assignment because it was "not the cool and fun and sexy job to have within the FBI." His friends in the bureau teased him. "They told me, 'This cyber thing is going to hurt your career.'"

Following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, FBI Director Robert Mueller created the bureau's Cyber Division to fight computer-based crime. The division took over the NIPC's investigative work, while prevention efforts moved to the Department of Homeland Security, which was established in November 2002. The DHS, however, put the computer crime prevention mission on hold for years as it focused instead on deterring physical attacks.

To ramp up the new division, the FBI put a cyber squad in each field office and launched a training program to help existing agents switch tracks. It also benefited from the "patriot effect," as talented computer experts who felt a call to service applied. Among them were Milan Patel and Anthony Ferrante, two of the agents who would attend the meeting with Comey.

Fresh out of college, Ferrante was working as a consultant at Ernst & Young on 9/11. From his office in a Midtown skyscraper, he watched the towers fall. In the days that followed, he resolved to use his computer skills to fight terrorism. While pursuing a master's degree in computer science at Fordham University, he met with an FBI recruiter who was trying to hire digital experts for the new Cyber Division. The recruiter asked Ferrante what languages he knew.

"HTML, JavaScript, C++, Business Basic," he answered.

"What are those?" the perplexed recruiter responded. "I mean, Russian, Spanish, French."

It wouldn't be the last time Ferrante felt misunderstood by the bureau. When he arrived at Quantico in 2004, he found himself in a firearms class of about 40 new agents-in-training. There, the instructor asked: "Who here has never shot a gun?"

With his gaze cast downward as he concentrated on taking notes, Ferrante raised his hand. The room became silent. He looked around and saw he was the only one. Everyone stared.

"What's your background?" the instructor asked.

"I'm a computer hacker," Ferrante said.

On a campus that recruits jokingly referred to as “college with guns,” his answer was not well received. The instructor shook his head, rolled his eyes and moved on.

Patel arrived at the FBI Academy in 2003 with a college degree in computer science from the New Jersey Institute of Technology. From Quantico, he was assigned to a cyber squad in New York, where his new boss didn’t quite know what to do with him. The supervisor handed him a beeper, a Rand McNally map and the keys to a 1993 Ford Aerostar van that “looked like it was bombed out in Baghdad,” Patel said. Another agent set him up with a computer running a long-outdated version of Windows.

“Oh my God, this is like the Stone Age,” he thought. As time went on, Patel discovered how cumbersome it was to brief supervisors about cyber cases. Since many of them knew little about computers, he had to write reports that he considered “borderline childish.”

“You had to try to relate computers to cars,” he said. “You’re speaking a foreign language to them, yet they’re in charge, making decisions over the health of what you do.”

Patel realized that most of his Cyber Division colleagues, like Arruda and Augenbaum, didn’t have a technical background. The bureau tried to turn traditional law enforcement officers into tech specialists while passing over computer scientists who could not meet its qualifications to become agents. “Is the person who can do 15 pull-ups and run 2 miles around the track in under 16 minutes the same guy that you want decrypting ransomware?” Patel said. “Typically people who write code and enjoy the passion of figuring out malware, they’re not in a gym cranking out squats.”

Some agents ended up in the Cyber Division because it had openings when they graduated from Quantico, or because it was a stop on the way to a promotion. In a popular move, many senior agents and supervisors pursued a final assignment in the division before becoming eligible for retirement at age 50, knowing it made them more attractive to private-sector employers for their post-FBI careers.

“On a bureau cyber squad, you typically have one or two people, if you’re lucky, who can decrypt and do network traffic analysis and programming and the really hard work,” Patel said. “And you’ve got two or three people who know how to investigate cybercrime and have a computer science degree. And the rest — half of the team — are in the cyber program, but they don’t really know anything about cyber.” Some of those agents made successful cases anyway, but they were the exception.

Despite the internal headwinds, Patel worked on some of the bureau’s marquee cybercrime cases. He led the investigation into Silk Road, the black-market bazaar where illegal goods and services were anonymously bought and sold. As part of a sprawling investigation into the dark web marketplace, law enforcement located six of Silk Road’s servers scattered across the globe and compromised the site before shutting it down in October 2013. Ross Ulbricht, of San Francisco, was later found guilty on narcotics and hacking charges for his role in creating and operating the site. He is serving two life sentences plus 40 years in prison. Patel was nominated for the FBI Director’s Award for Investigative Excellence; he became a Cyber Division unit chief, advising on technology strategy. Then, shortly after the Dirty Dozen meeting with Comey, he left the FBI for a higher-paying job in the private sector.

Ferrante was selected for the FBI’s Cyber Action Team, which deployed in response to the most critical cyber incidents globally. As a supervisory special agent, he became chief of staff of the FBI’s Cyber Division. After the meeting with Comey, Ferrante remained in the FBI for another two years. He left in 2017 to become global head of cybersecurity for FTI Consulting, where he worked with companies victimized by ransomware.

He kept tabs on the bureau’s public actions in fighting the crime. Despite occasional successes, he said in 2021 that he was disappointed by the small number of ransomware-related indictments in the years that followed Comey’s 2015 gathering.

“They would work cases, but those cases would just spin, spin, spin,” Ferrante said. “No, they’re not taking it seriously, so of course it’s out of control now because it’s gone unchecked for so many years. ...



Nobody understood it — nobody within the FBI, and nobody within the Department of Justice. Because they didn't understand it, they didn't put proper resources behind it. And because they didn't put proper resources behind it, the cases that were worked never got any legs or never got the attention they deserved."

By 2012, FBI leadership recognized that most crimes involved some technical element: the use of email or cellphones, for example. So that year, it began to prioritize hiring non-agent computer scientists to help on cases. These civilian cyber experts, who worked in field offices around the country, did not carry weapons and were not required to pass regular physical fitness tests. But respect for the non-gun-carrying technical experts was lacking. This widespread condescension was reflected in a nickname that Stacy Arruda, the early NIPC agent who went on to a career as a supervisor in the Cyber Division, had for them: dolphins.

"Someone who is highly intelligent and can't communicate with humans," said Arruda, who retired from the FBI in 2018. "When we would travel, we would bring our dolphins with us. And when the other party started squeaking, we would have our dolphins squeak right back at them."

If agents like Patel and Ferrante had a hard time winning the institutional respect of the FBI, it seemed almost impossible for the dolphins to do so. They worked on technical aspects of all types of cases, not just cyber ones. Yet, despite the critical role they played in investigating cyber cases — sometimes as the sole person in a field office who understood the technical underpinnings of a case — these civilian computer scientists were often regarded as agents' support staff and treated as second-class citizens.

Randy Pargman took a circuitous route to becoming the Seattle field office's dolphin. As a kid in California, Pargman regularly hung out with his grandma, who was interested in technology. She bought magazines that contained basic code and helped Pargman copy it onto their Atari video game console. It was his introduction to computer programming. Later, as a teenager, Pargman was drawn to a booth of ham radio enthusiasts at a county fair and soon began saving up to buy his own \$300 radio. It was the early 1990s, before most home users were online, so Pargman was thrilled when he used the radio to access pages from a library in Japan and send primitive emails.

After high school, Pargman put his radio skills to work when he became a Washington State Patrol dispatcher. Although it wasn't a part of the job description, he created one computer program to improve the dispatch system's efficiency and another to automate the state's process for investigating fraud in vehicle registrations. The experience led him to study computer science at Mississippi State. In the summer of 2000, while still in college, Pargman completed an FBI internship, an experience that left him with a deep appreciation for the bureau's mission. So, following brief stints working for the Department of Defense and as a private sector software engineer once he graduated, he applied to become an agent. He was hired in 2004, around the same time as Patel and Ferrante.

Like those two agents, Pargman was shocked by the digital Stone Age he found himself in upon arriving. At the FBI Academy, a computer instructor gave lessons on typing interviews and reports on WordPerfect, the word processing platform whose popularity had peaked in the late 1980s. To Pargman, even more outrageous than the FBI's use of WordPerfect was the notion that agents would need instruction on such a basic program. The first week of class, the instructor delivered another surprise.

"OK, who are the IT nerds in here?" he asked.

After Pargman and a classmate raised their hands, the instructor addressed them directly.

"You're not going to be working on cybercrimes. You're going to be working on whatever the bureau needs you to do."

The other tech-savvy recruit later confided to Pargman that he was dropping out of the FBI Academy to return to private industry. "This is not what I thought it was going to be," he said.

Pargman was similarly torn. He believed in the FBI's mission but wanted to work solely on cybercrime. Like Ferrante, he didn't have experience with guns, and he was unsure about how he would handle that aspect of the job. He faced a reckoning when an FBI speaker led a sobering session about the toughest aspects of working for the bureau, from deadly force scenarios to the higher-than-average rates of suicide and divorce among agents.

After consulting with FBI counselors and a bureau chaplain, Pargman decided he didn't want to become an agent. Instead, he stayed in the FBI as a civilian, working as a software developer at the FBI Academy. Eight years later, when the FBI launched the computer science track, Pargman eagerly applied. He became the Seattle field office's dedicated computer scientist in October 2012.

"This is why I had gotten into the FBI to begin with," Pargman said. "I can concentrate just on cybercrime investigations and not have to deal with the whole badge and gun."

Once Pargman got to Seattle, he began to dream big. His vision: The FBI could model its Cyber Division after [one of the world's most successful computer crime-fighting law enforcement organizations](#), the Dutch High Tech Crime Unit. He knew how traditional and hidebound the bureau was, how different from the HTCUC and its innovative culture. But, ever idealistic, he hoped that the HTCUC's remarkable track record would persuade the FBI to adopt elements of the Dutch approach.

Pargman had long been familiar with the HTCUC's reputation for arresting hackers and disrupting their infrastructure. When he met a Dutch officer through an FBI program for midcareer professionals, he asked her the secret to the HTCUC's success. Her response was straightforward: the HTCUC was effective because it paired each traditional police officer with a computer scientist, partnerships that had been a founding priority of the unit. While the HTCUC computer scientists weren't required to pass police exams, meet physical fitness requirements, or handle weapons, they nonetheless were entitled to the same rank and promotions as their traditional counterparts. They also were not obligated to pivot to noncomputer work during their police careers.

The density of computer science experts in the HTCUC astounded Pargman, who thought it was brilliant. He suggested the Dutch approach to managers in the FBI's Operational Technology Division, which oversaw the new computer science track. They laughed.

"We can't get funding for that many computer scientists," one contact told him. "That would be crazy."

Pargman acknowledged that, since the FBI's Cyber Division was much larger than the Dutch Police's HTCUC, establishing a one-to-one partnership was a stretch. Yet the FBI's setup all but ensured that its drastically outnumbered computer scientists would not find a collective voice, as the tech experts had done in the HTCUC. As Pargman dug into cyber investigations in Seattle, he learned that the bureau's staffing imbalance was straining its cyber experts, both civilian computer scientists and technically advanced agents like Patel and Ferrante.

Many of the cyber agents Pargman worked with in Seattle had prior careers as accountants, attorneys or police officers. To get acquainted with the digital world, they took crash courses offered by the SANS Institute, the bureau's contractor for cybersecurity training; popular offerings included Introduction to Cyber Security and Security Essentials Bootcamp. From an institutional perspective, learning on the job to investigate computer crime was no different from learning on the job to investigate white-collar or gang crime. But FBI leadership didn't take into account something that early leaders in the Dutch HTCUC knew from the unit's start: It's not easy to teach advanced computer skills to someone who has no technical background.

Cyber agents routinely came to Pargman with basic tasks such as analyzing email headers, the technical details stored within messages that can contain helpful clues.

"This is easy, you need to learn how to do this," Pargman told one agent. He produced the IP address from the headers.

“What does that mean?” the agent responded. “What is this IP address?”

Pargman had to make the time to help because, if he didn’t, the agent might do something embarrassing, like attempt to subpoena publicly available information “because they just didn’t know any better.”

In the FBI, investigations into specific ransomware strains were organized by field office. For example, Springfield, Illinois, investigated complaints involving a strain called Rapid, while Anchorage, Alaska, investigated those related to Russia-based Ryuk, one of the first ransomware gangs to routinely demand six-figure payments and to carefully select and research its targets. From time to time, Pargman learned of victim complaints to the Seattle office about emerging ransomware strains. Since cases weren’t assigned directly to computer scientists, he pushed the agents to take them on. “Oh boy, here’s one that nobody is working,” he told one colleague.

“Let’s jump on this.”

“That sounds amazing,” the agent responded. “But I’ll be so busy with that case that I won’t get to do anything else.”

In the early days of ransomware, when hackers demanded no more than a few hundred dollars, the FBI was uninterested because the damages were small — not unlike Cliff Stoll’s dilemma at Berkeley. Later, once losses grew to hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars, agents had other reasons to want to avoid investigating ransomware. In the FBI, prestige springs from being a successful “trial agent,” working on cases that result in indictments and convictions that make the news. But ransomware cases, even with the enthusiastic support of a computer scientist like Pargman, were long and complex, with a low likelihood of arrest.

The fact that most ransomware hackers were outside the United States made the investigative process challenging from the start. To collect evidence from abroad, agents needed to coordinate with federal prosecutors, FBI legal attachés and international law enforcement agencies through the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty process. Seemingly straightforward tasks, such as obtaining an image of a suspicious server, could take months. And if the server was in a hostile country such as Iran or North Korea, the agents were out of luck. Aware of this international labyrinth, even some federal prosecutors discouraged agents from pursuing complex cyber investigations.

During Pargman’s time as Seattle’s computer scientist, the field office took on a number of technically sophisticated cases. He was especially proud of one that led to the Justice Department’s indictment, unsealed in 2018, of hackers accused in the notorious Fin7 attacks. They breached more than 100 U.S. companies and led to the theft of more than 15 million customer credit card records. But during his seven years in Seattle, the office never got a handle on ransomware.

“If you spend all of your time chasing ransomware, and for years you never make a single arrest of anybody, you’re seen as a failure,” Pargman said. “Even if you’re doing a ton of good in the world, like sharing information and helping protect people, you’re still a failure as an investigator because you haven’t arrested anybody.” Despite its own inaction, the FBI feuded with the other federal agency responsible for investigating ransomware: the Secret Service. Although the Secret Service has been guarding presidents since 1894, its lesser-known mission of combating financial crimes dates back even longer — to the day in April 1865 that Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. Before heading to Ford’s Theatre, Lincoln signed legislation creating the agency and giving it the mandate to fight counterfeit currency. As financial crime evolved and moved online, the Secret Service and the FBI squabbled over cases. Although it, too, had a federal mandate to fight computer crime, the Secret Service was sometimes bigfooted by the FBI, said Mark Grantz, who was a supervisory special agent for the Secret Service in Washington.

“They’d say: ‘Yeah, we’ve got a case on that already. We were looking at him five years ago. Give us everything you’ve got and we’ll go from there.’ That was their M.O.,” Grantz said. It left him wondering: “You haven’t touched that case in five years, why are you asking me for my case file?”

Grantz led an investigation into a ransomware attack in January 2017, eight days before Donald Trump’s inauguration. The strike disabled computers linked to 126 street cameras in a video surveillance system monitoring public spaces across Washington, D.C., including along the presidential parade route. Instead of paying the five-figure ransom, the district scrambled to wipe and restart the cameras, which were back online three days before the swearing-in. Assisted by other law enforcement organizations, the Secret Service traced the hack to two Romanians, who were arrested in Europe, extradited to the United States and found guilty on wire fraud charges — an uncommon U.S. law enforcement success against ransomware operators.

Other Secret Service investigations sometimes stalled because agents had to rotate away for protective detail. “That’s where it gets frustrating,” Grantz said. “You’d train someone. They’d do digital forensics for five years. They’d get really good at it. And then you’d send them off to do presidential detail.”

Randy Pargman also grew frustrated by the FBI’s reluctance to engage meaningfully with private-sector cybersecurity researchers like the Ransomware Hunting Team. An elite, invitation-only group of tech wizards in seven countries, the team has uncovered keys to hundreds of ransomware strains, saving millions of individuals, businesses, schools and other victims from paying billions of dollars in ransom. When the FBI did connect with experts in the private sector, sensitive information typically flowed only in one direction — to the bureau.

Following large cyberattacks against U.S. targets, the FBI routinely affirmed its commitment to public-private partnerships to help prevent and gather intelligence on such strikes. But some agents believed the rhetoric was hollow, comparing it to public officials’ offering “thoughts and prayers” after mass shootings. The reality was that many people in the FBI had a deep distrust of private-sector researchers.

“There’s this feeling among most agents that if they share even a little bit of information with somebody in the private sector, that information will get out, broadcast over the internet — and the bad guys will definitely read it, and it will destroy the whole case,” Pargman said.

Even though he couldn’t work on ransomware cases, Pargman found ways to feel fulfilled in his job, including by helping organizations defend themselves against impending cyber intrusions. He examined malware command-and-control servers obtained through the MLAT process, then alerted potential victims to imminent attacks. “That was a really good feeling because we stopped a ton of those intrusions,” he said. FBI leadership rewarded his efforts: Pargman earned both the FBI Director’s Award for Excellence in Technical Advancement and the FBI Medal of Excellence.

But he grew tired of his subordinate role as an “agent helper,” and he thought about how things would be different if the FBI were more like the Dutch HTCU. In the bureau, he couldn’t be promoted since Cyber Division leadership roles were open only to agents. And while agents could retire at 50 with full pensions, he had to wait until age 62, and would receive less money. In 2019, Pargman resigned from the FBI, telling his supervisor he wanted to be in a role where he could enact changes rather than just suggest them.

“I love working for the FBI,” he told his supervisor. “It’s very meaningful and fulfilling. But there is no leadership spot for me to go to, only because I’m not an agent. So you cannot be upset that I’m going to get a job where I can be a leader, and make changes, and create a team to do big things.”

When it came to ransomware, the FBI didn’t have a lengthy roster of achievements to boast about. It would not be until after the May 2021 attack on the Colonial Pipeline, which shuttered gas stations across the Southeast, that the FBI would prioritize the ransomware threat and embrace assistance from private researchers like the Ransomware Hunting Team. But even with its new emphasis on ransomware, the FBI didn’t undertake fundamental reforms to expand its roster of cyber experts. It still wanted its cyber agents

to be athletic college graduates with relevant job experience, who also had to be willing to shoot a gun, relocate their families and pivot away from investigating cybercrime as needed.

The bureau's reluctance to adapt disappointed some former agents. "I think the next generation of cyber people in the bureau should be the type of people who want to be cyber first, and not agents at all," said Patel, one of the agents who attended the 2015 meeting with Comey. "The bureau needs expertly trained technical programmers, cybersecurity engineers, that know how to write code, compile, dissect and investigate — and it has nothing to do with carrying a gun."

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## Terrorism, Extremism

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HEADLINE	10/19 China blocks Shahid Mahmood terror label
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.firstpost.com/explainers/explained-who-is-lets-shahid-mahmood-who-china-blocked-from-being-designated-a-global-terrorist-11478311.html">https://www.firstpost.com/explainers/explained-who-is-lets-shahid-mahmood-who-china-blocked-from-being-designated-a-global-terrorist-11478311.html</a>
GIST	<p>China has blocked a bid by India and the USA to list Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) leader Shahid Mahmood as a global terrorist.</p> <p>China placed a hold on the proposal by India and the United States to designate Mahmood as a global terrorist under the 1267 Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee of the UN Security Council.</p> <p>This is the fourth time in as many months that China has put a hold on listing proposals to designate Pakistan-based terrorists under the 1267 Al Qaeda Sanctions Committee regime.</p> <p>But who is Mahmood? And what other terrorists has China protected at the UN?</p> <p>Let's take a closer look: As per the treasury department, Mahmood was born in Karachi on 10 April, 1980.</p> <p>Mahmood has served as the vice-chairman of Falah-i-Insaniat Foundation (FIF), a humanitarian and fundraising arm of LeT.</p> <p>The LeT has been involved in major attacks in India such as the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack, Red Fort Attack in 2000, Rampur CRPF Camp attack in January 2008, Khanpora (Baramulla) attack in 2018, Srinagar attack in June 2018 and Gurez/Bandipora attack in 2018.</p> <p>As per <i>News18</i>, Mahmood had worked alongside Jamat-ud-Dawah (JuD) and LeT chief Hafiz Saeed to create bases and sympathisers in India by sending funds in the garb of religious or charity work, which would be later utilised for anti-India and terror activities.</p> <p>As part of LeT's operations team, Mahmood's areas of responsibility included Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh.</p> <p>He has previously stated that the LeT's 'primary concern' should be attacking India and America.</p> <p>In August 2012, Mahmood, while in charge of the Sindh, Pakistan chapter of FIF, led a LeT delegation to Burma.</p> <p>Mahmood was identified as a LeT publication's wing member in 2013, according to the US treasury department</p> <p>Mahmood was instructed to forge covert links with Islamic organisations in Bangladesh and Burma, as per the treasury department.</p>

Mahmood travelled to Bangladesh to 'distribute funds to a Burmese migrant camp' for the purpose of facilitating LeT recruitment, as per the press release.

In 2014, as leader of the FIF, he travelled to Syria and Turkey.

He was subsequently appointed to lead FIF efforts in both countries. Mahmood has also travelled to Bangladesh and Gaza on behalf of FIF.

The department in December 2016 designated Mahmood a global terrorist.

#### **Other terrorists China protected at UN**

China earlier blocked proposals to designate Lashkar-e-Taiba's Sajid Mir, LeT and Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) leader Abdul Rehman Makki, and Abdul Rauf Azhar as global terrorists.

Mir, a top Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) commander, is in charge of its "India setup" of LeT.

#### **Mir, 44, is on the FBI's list of most-wanted terrorists.**

He was one of the masterminds of the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks that left 166 people dead, including six Americans.

Mir was called the "project manager" of the Mumbai attacks.

Mir reportedly visited India in 2005 using a fake passport with a fake name.

Mir served as a "handler" for David Headley and others who were directed to carry out actions relating to planning, preparing for, and carrying out terrorist attacks on behalf of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

The US has placed a \$5 million bounty on his head for his role in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack.

Mir is responsible for attacks in about half a dozen other countries, including the US, Australia, France, Denmark and the UK.

Mir in June was given a 15-year sentence in a terror-financing case by an anti-terrorism court in Pakistan.

The FBI has listed the charges against Mir as conspiracy to injure property of foreign government, providing material support to terrorists, killing a citizen outside the US, aiding and abetting, and bombing of places of public use.

"Sajid Mir remains a shadowy figure about whom not much is known. Even his antecedents are fuzzy. Some reports claim that he joined the LeT at the young age of 16 and then rose up the ranks. But other reports, which might be circumstantially more credible, claim that he is a Pakistan Army/ISI member/officer who has been working very closely with the LeT," according to a 2020 report by Jihad Watch.

A US law enforcement official once said that "Mir is too powerful and too well connected for them to go after. We need the Pakistanis to go after the Taliban and Al Qaeda."

China defended its September move on Mir, claiming its action was consistent with "relevant rules" of the anti-terrorism committee of the UNSC.

Makki, 74, a US-designated terrorist, is the Lashkar-e-Taiba's (LeT) deputy chief.

He is the brother-in-law of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) chief and 26/11 mastermind Hafiz Saeed.



Makki, the head of JuD's political and international affairs wing and in-charge of its charity Falah-e-Insaniat Foundation (FIF), was arrested during a government crackdown against the outlawed organisations in May.

**Makki and Saeed are both in Lahore's Kot Lapkhapt jail.**

In November 2010, the US Department of the Treasury designated Makki as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist. As a result of this designation, among other consequences, all property, and interests in property, of Makki that are subject to US jurisdiction are blocked, and US persons are generally prohibited from engaging in any transactions with Makki.

In addition, it is a crime to knowingly provide, or attempt or conspire to provide, material support or resources to the FTO LeT, the US said.

The US Department of State's Rewards for Justice programme is offering a reward of up to \$2 million for information on Makki, also known as Abdulrahman Maki.

Makki has occupied various leadership roles within Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), a US-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). He has also played a role in raising funds for LeT operations.

"In 2020, a Pakistani anti-terrorism court convicted Makki on one count of terrorism financing and sentenced him to prison. The United States continues to seek information on Makki because the Pakistani judicial system has released convicted LeT leaders and operatives in the past, according to information on the Rewards for Justice website.

China in June put a "technical hold" on the proposal to list Makki as a global terrorist.

Calling the decision by China to place a "technical hold" on the listing requested by the United States and India "regrettable" and "extremely unfortunate", New Delhi said that China's actions ran counter to its claims of combating terrorism.

**It added that evidence against Makki was "overwhelming".**

Abdul Rauf Azhar, the younger brother of JeM chief Masood Azhar, was born in 1974 in Pakistan.

Sanctioned by the US in December 2010, he has been involved in planning and executing numerous terror strikes in India including the hijacking of Indian Airlines aircraft IC814 in 1999, the attack on Parliament in 2001 and the targeting of the IAF base in Pathankot in 2016.

China in August put a technical hold on a joint proposal at the UN Security Council by India and the US to blacklist Azhar.

All other 14 member states of the top UN body supported the move.

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HEADLINE	10/18 US promises Taliban not to fund rebels?
SOURCE	<a href="https://nationalinterest.org/blog/middle-east-watch/hands-united-states-promises-taliban-not-fund-rebels-205409">https://nationalinterest.org/blog/middle-east-watch/hands-united-states-promises-taliban-not-fund-rebels-205409</a>
GIST	<p>The U.S. government reportedly assured the Taliban during a set of negotiations in early October that it would not <a href="#">attempt to fund</a> resistance to the new government—an announcement made after months of civil protests and escalating anti-Taliban <a href="#">militant activity</a> across the country.</p> <p>The alleged American assurances came to light after a Taliban official described a high-level U.S.-Taliban meeting—the first meeting between the former enemies since the <a href="#">assassination</a> of Al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in Kabul in July—<a href="#">according</a> to Qatar's state-run Al Jazeera media network. The meeting took place in Doha, Qatar's capital, and allegedly included a CIA deputy director on the American side. The U.S. State Department did not comment on the details of the meeting, but</p>

confirmed that it had taken place, stating that Washington would “continue to engage the Taliban pragmatically regarding American interests.”

During the meeting, Taliban officials voiced their opposition to President Joe Biden’s [transfer](#) of \$3.5 billion from the reserves of Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB), the country’s central bank, into a Swiss trust fund to be used for humanitarian aid projects. The group declared in August that the move was “unacceptable and a violation of international norms.” It has also condemned Biden’s plan to distribute an additional \$3.5 billion from the DAB funds to survivors of the September 11 terror attacks, a move that many Western commentators [likened](#) to theft.

Qatar has played a key role in mediation between the Taliban and the United States on previous occasions, and Doha was the site of a controversial agreement promising a future U.S. withdrawal from the country in February 2020—an agreement that detractors have warned played a critical role in the internationally-recognized Afghan government’s collapse in August 2021. The United States has accused the Taliban of [violating](#) that agreement by sheltering Zawahiri in Kabul, although Taliban leaders [insisted](#) that they had no knowledge of his whereabouts.

Over the past year, the Taliban has struggled to combat a growing insurgent movement within Afghanistan. Opposition to the Taliban has come both from more liberal groups such as the National Resistance Front (NRF), which has maintained an insurgency in the north, as well as from Islamist groups that regard the Taliban as insufficiently devout. Within the latter group, the most destructive opposition force has been the Islamic State’s Khorasan Province (ISIS-K), which has conducted a series of bombings against [government targets](#) and ethnic and [religious minorities](#) in order to undermine the Taliban’s promises to provide security.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/19 Threat of radicalization in Syria IS prisons</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.eurasiareview.com/19102022-threat-of-radicalization-in-syrias-isis-prisons-analysis/">https://www.eurasiareview.com/19102022-threat-of-radicalization-in-syrias-isis-prisons-analysis/</a>
GIST	<p>Tens of thousands of ISIS detainees are housed in temporary prison camps and detention centers in Syria and Iraq by US-backed Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). Charles Lister, the Director of Syria and Countering Terrorism and Extremism Programs at the Middle East Institute, warned that the international community is ‘doing nothing to prevent the current generation of detainees from wanting to continue to fight if they get out, and creating a melting pot for the next generation.’</p> <p>As reported by <i>Militant Wire</i>, technology and illicit financing are being used by terrorist sympathisers to raise funds for ISIS spouses and children in Syria through encrypted Telegram channels and digital wallets like QIWI. The funds are being raised for two primary reasons—smuggling former detainees from detention camps and targeting low-security detention centres managed by Kurdish militias. There are reportedly at least 14 such facilities in North-East Syria.</p> <p>The US-backed SDF fighters confront multifaceted challenges of managing these makeshift prisons in a war zone. These areas have also faced large-scale prison breaks. The attack at Gweiron prison in January 2022 was aimed at freeing over 3,000 detainees, including 700 minors. ISIS’ news agency, <i>Amaq</i>, claimed that 800 terrorists had been freed.<sup>6</sup> The SDF successfully traced around 100 detainees. Such attacks on prison facilities are reminiscent of the prison break in July 2013, when more than 600 prisoners were freed from detention facilities like Abu Ghraib, many of whom later were at the forefront of the military assaults launched by ISIS during its rise to power.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Kurdish forces appear to have been thrust into a position reminiscent of American forces stationed at Camp Bucca and Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. There, the confinement of some of the most radicalised elements aligned with extremist Salafist ideology in one space fed the pool that eventually emerged as elements of Al-Qaeda in Iraq and, later, ISIS.</p> <p>Camps in Al-Hol, in the eastern al-Hasaka governorate, have been at the epicentre of continued recruitment, radicalisation, and violence by ISIS followers. As per reports, battle-hardened former fighters are sharing space with impressionable teenagers in converted warehouses and schools. Alarminglly,</p>

murders, sexual abuse, and unrestricted transit within and outside the detention camps underscore security gaps. Approximately 24 killings have occurred inside the Al-Hol camp alone from January to July 2022, including of a humanitarian worker, where spouses, widows, and children of ISIS fighters have been detained.

This overflowing space with more than 65,000 residents is where apparently radicalised women are molding the extremist worldview in their wards. Support for re-establishing the ISIS' physical caliphate is allegedly being sustained in these camps, through social media indoctrination, with access to phones made easy, possibly by corrupt patrolling officers. Cumulatively, these factors have the potential to fuel online violent extremists and terror propagandists, reigniting the diminishing threat of ISIS fighters.

The refusal of several governments, meanwhile, including the British and French, to take back the 'caliphate' members to face justice in their countries of origin could foment humanitarian and security crises. Timothy Alan Betts, the Acting Special Envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, sounded alarm in July 2022 when he stated that

"Conditions are so harsh in northeastern Syria in particular that we are seeing a greater openness by residents to ISIS's return now than at any time since the fall of the physical "caliphate" in 2019. The more ISIS can leverage local support to train and reorganize; the more sophisticated and frequent their efforts will be to free detainees and recruit in the displaced persons camp."

The United Kingdom, on its part, runs de-radicalisation programmes like Prevent. Reports flag that authorities have struggled to run separation centres at high-security prisons like HMS Belmarsh efficiently. By 2021, only 10 per cent out of 450 British ISIS recruits had been prosecuted by judicial authorities. The challenge could grow further in the likelihood of repatriation of remaining fighters and their families. US administrations have called on the UK to take back their nationals from Syria. Reports note that around 16 women and 30 to 60 children—all British nationals—are lodged in SDF-run facilities in Syria. While at least 900 British citizens travelled to join ISIS, the precise number of male combatants that remain in detention camps is not clear.

Meanwhile, in Morocco, by July 2021, over 300 ISIS prisoners were lodged in prisons. The authorities are implementing a three-month course focused on economics, religion, and vocational training to ensure their gradual reintegration into the society. The Moroccan prison authorities have undertaken this initiative since 2017, with only one person out of the 156 graduates re-convicted for a non-terrorist offence. It has also been suggested by experts that by conducting regular risk assessments and special training for prison staff, can de-radicalisation efforts succeed in a given context.

#### Conclusion

Concerns of radicalisation in SDF-run facilities in Syria remain high, given that reports flag corruption, crime, and deplorable security conditions at these camps. While prison breaks have also occurred, access to technology and minimal security measures have reinforced the security dilemma facing prison authorities. The possible indoctrination of new recruits in an ideologically charged setting with minimal security measures adds to regional instability. Even if detainees are repatriated to their homelands, their rehabilitation and reintegration are likely to present challenges in those societies.

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HEADLINE	10/17 Colombia 'narco-terrorist' sentenced 35yrs
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/pr/colombian-drug-kingpin-and-paramilitary-leader-sentenced-35-years-prison-operating">https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/pr/colombian-drug-kingpin-and-paramilitary-leader-sentenced-35-years-prison-operating</a>
GIST	Earlier today, in federal court in Brooklyn, Daniel Rendon Herrera, also known as "Don Mario," a citizen of Colombia, was sentenced by United States District Judge Dora L. Irizarry to 35 years' imprisonment for engaging in a continuing criminal enterprise as a leader of the paramilitary, multibillion dollar drug organization known as the "Clan del Golfo" (CDG), and 15 years' imprisonment for conspiring to provide material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia

(AUC). The sentences will run concurrently. As part of the sentence, the Court ordered Rendon Herrera to pay \$45,750,000 million in forfeiture. The defendant pleaded guilty to the charges in November 2021.

Breon Peace, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; Damian Williams, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York; Matthew G. Olsen, Assistant Attorney General for the Justice Department's National Security Division; Frank A. Tarentino III, Special Agent-in-Charge, Drug Enforcement Administration, New York Division (DEA); Michael Alfonso, Acting Special Agent-in-Charge, Homeland Security Investigations, New York (HSI); Michael J. Driscoll, Assistant Director-in-Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI); Keechant L. Sewell, Commissioner, New York City Police Department (NYPD); and Steven A. Nigrelli, First Deputy Superintendent, New York State Police (NYSP), announced the sentence.

"Once the most feared narco-terrorist in Colombia, today marks the end of the criminal career of Rendon Herrera, responsible for importing tons of cocaine, fueling violence, perpetuating drug abuse leaving a wake of destruction from Colombia to the United States, and stained with the blood of rival drug traffickers and civilians who were tortured and killed by the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia," stated United States Attorney Peace. "Our Office remains committed to cooperating with our international partners to dismantle transnational criminal organizations like the Clan del Golfo."

"Daniel Rendon Herrera was one of the most prolific drug traffickers to ever operate in Colombia," stated DEA Special Agent-in-Charge Tarentino. "As leader of the AUC and Clan del Golfo, Don Mario was responsible for not only importing multi-ton quantities of cocaine into the United States, but also for terrorizing the citizens of Colombia for financial gain. Today's sentencing underscores DEA's commitment to bringing to justice drug traffickers at the highest levels who cause the most harm throughout our communities."

"These paramilitary drug cartels may seem to be a world away, but they have a deadly impact on communities here in New York City. Today's sentencing demonstrates we and our partners remain committed to pursuing the leadership of these organizations and will hold them accountable for the devastation they cause," stated FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Driscoll.

"Starting in the late 1990's, Rendon Herrera was the leader and mastermind behind a Foreign Terrorist Organization and Specially-Designated Global Terrorism Organization. Under his leadership, Clan del Golfo (CDG) was responsible for heinous acts of violence, often leaving death and destruction in its wake to further the organization's global cocaine trafficking network," said Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) New York Acting Special Agent in Charge Michael Alfonso. "Today's sentencing and ordered forfeiture demonstrates the weight of Rendon Herrera's crimes. HSI will continue to work ceaselessly alongside our partners to protect Americans by dismantling and disrupting transnational criminal organizations and bring their leaders to justice."

"Today's sentencing reinforces the NYPD's tireless work to rid our city of illegal narcotics and ensures meaningful consequences for one of the world's most notorious narcotics traffickers," said NYPD Commissioner Sewell. "The drugs and violence linked to this case knew no borders – but neither did the combined efforts of our NYPD officers and law enforcement partners as we collaborated on the local, state, federal, and international levels to achieve justice. For their sustained dedication, I am proud to thank the U.S. Attorney's Offices for the Eastern and Southern Districts of New York, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, Homeland Security Investigations, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the New York State Police, and everyone else who contributed to this successful outcome."

As set forth in the court filings and proceedings, since the late 1990's, Rendon Herrera was a leader of the designated foreign terrorist organization, the AUC, and founder and leader of the CDG, formerly and also referred to as Los Urabeños and Clan Usuga, effectively the successor organization to the AUC.

The AUC, founded in 1997, was a Colombian paramilitary and drug-trafficking organization, designated in 2001 by the United States Department of State as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and Specially-Designated Global Terrorism Organization. The AUC engaged in armed conflict with the Fuerzas

Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), Colombia's main guerilla group, and sought to remove FARC sympathizers from positions of power and influence in Colombia. To support its political and terrorist objectives, the AUC imposed "taxes" on cocaine trafficked through AUC-controlled areas and engaged in violent attacks including murders and kidnappings. By 2006, many members of the AUC demobilized as part of the Colombian government's Justice and Peace process – a process under which paramilitary members surrender to the Colombian government and relinquish their criminally-derived assets in exchange for reduced sentences and amnesty from extradition. Rather than submit to the peace process, Rendon Herrera re-mobilized the AUC as the CDG.

The CDG, like the AUC, continued to finance their paramilitary and drug trafficking by imposing a "tax" on multi-ton shipments of cocaine that transited through areas in Colombia controlled by the organization, which shipments – more than 80 tons of cocaine – were ultimately destined for importation into the United States. The CDG also employed "sicarios," or hitmen, who carried out various acts of violence, including murders, assaults, kidnappings, and assassinations to collect drug debts, maintain discipline, control and expand drug territory and to promote and enhance the prestige, reputation and position of the organization. By 2009, when Rendon Herrera was captured by the Colombian National Police, he commanded 16 "bloques," or territories, across Colombia and thousands of armed paramilitary fighters. Additionally, since 2009, Rendon Herrera has been designated by the United States Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Control, as a Specially Designated Narcotics Trafficker pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act. Rendon Herrera's successor as leader of the Clan del Golfo, Dairo Antonio Úsuga David, also known as "Otoniel," was extradited to the Eastern District of New York in May 2022 to face charges of leading a continuing criminal enterprise and participating in an international cocaine manufacturing and distribution conspiracy, and is awaiting trial.

The government's case is being prosecuted by the Office's International Narcotics and Money Laundering Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Jonathan P. Lax, Francisco J. Navarro, and Andrew D. Grubin are in charge of the prosecution and Assistant United States Attorney Claire S. Kedeshian of the Office's Asset Recovery Section is handling forfeiture matters, with assistance provided by Assistant United States Attorney Alexander Li of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, and Trial Attorney Elisabeth Poteat of the Justice Department's National Security Division, Counterterrorism Section. The Justice Department's Office of International Affairs handled the extradition in this matter and the Criminal Division's Narcotic and Dangerous Drug Section (NDDS) Judicial Attaché Office in Bogotá, Colombia was instrumental in supporting the case.

This prosecution is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) investigation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level drug traffickers, money launderers, gangs, and transnational criminal organizations that threaten the United States by using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach that leverages the strengths of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies against criminal networks.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Firm pleads guilty: material support to ISIS</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/lafarge-pleads-guilty-conspiring-provide-material-support-foreign-terrorist-organizations">https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/lafarge-pleads-guilty-conspiring-provide-material-support-foreign-terrorist-organizations</a>
GIST	<p>A global building materials manufacturer and its subsidiary pleaded guilty today to a one-count criminal information charging them with conspiring to provide material support and resources in Northern Syria from 2013 to 2014 to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and the al-Nusrah Front (ANF), both U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organizations. Immediately following the defendants' guilty pleas this morning, U.S. District Judge William F. Kuntz II sentenced the defendants to terms of probation and to pay financial penalties, including criminal fines and forfeiture, totaling \$777.78 million.</p> <p>According to court documents, Lafarge S.A., headquartered in Paris, France, and Lafarge Cement Syria (LCS) S.A., headquartered in Damascus, Syria, schemed to pay ISIS and ANF in exchange for permission to operate a cement plant in Syria from 2013 to 2014, which enabled LCS to obtain approximately \$70.3 million in revenue.</p>

“The terrorism crimes to which Lafarge and its subsidiary have pleaded guilty are a vivid reminder of how corporate crime can intersect with national security,” said Deputy Attorney General Lisa O. Monaco. “The defendants partnered with ISIS, one of the most brutal terrorist organizations the world has ever known, to enhance profits and increase market share — all while ISIS engaged in a notorious campaign of violence during the Syrian civil war. This case sends the clear message to all companies, but especially those operating in high-risk environments, to invest in robust compliance programs, pay vigilant attention to national security compliance risks, and conduct careful due diligence in mergers and acquisitions.”

“The defendants routed nearly six million dollars in illicit payments to two of the world’s most notorious terrorist organizations – ISIS and al-Nusrah Front in Syria – at a time those groups were brutalizing innocent civilians in Syria and actively plotting to harm Americans,” said Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen of the Justice Department’s National Security Division. “There is simply no justification for a multi-national corporation authorizing payments to designated terrorist organizations.”

From approximately May 2010 to September 2014, Lafarge, through LCS, operated a cement plant in the Jalabiyeh region of Northern Syria (the Jalabiyeh Cement Plant) that Lafarge had constructed at a cost of approximately \$680 million. After the start of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, Lafarge and LCS negotiated agreements to pay armed factions in the Civil War to protect LCS employees, to ensure continued operation of the Jalabiyeh Cement Plant, and to obtain economic advantage over their competitors in the Syrian cement market.

As Lafarge executives made clear in contemporaneous emails, their motives were primarily economic. LCS executives purchased raw materials needed to manufacture cement from ISIS-controlled suppliers; paid monthly “donations” to armed groups, including ISIS and ANF, so that employees, customers and suppliers could traverse checkpoints controlled by the armed groups on roads around the Jalabiyeh Cement Plant; and eventually agreed to make payments to ISIS based on the volume of cement that LCS sold to its customers, which Lafarge and LCS executives likened to paying “taxes.”

Lafarge and LCS executives intentionally structured their agreements with ISIS to compensate the terrorist organization based on the amount of cement that LCS was able to sell – effectively, a revenue-sharing agreement – to incentivize the terrorist group to act in LCS’s economic interest.

As a condition of entering into this revenue-sharing agreement, Lafarge and LCS executives sought ISIS’s assistance to impose costs on competitors selling Turkish cement imported into northern Syria, which was often sold more cheaply than cement produced at the Jalabiyeh Cement Plant. LCS executives made clear to the intermediaries negotiating with ISIS that, in exchange for LCS paying ISIS 750 Syrian Pounds per each ton of cement that it sold, they expected ISIS to take action against its competitors, either by stopping the sale of competing imported Turkish cement in the areas under ISIS’s control, or by imposing taxes on competing cement that would allow LCS to raise the prices at which it sold cement.

“In the midst of a civil war, Lafarge made the unthinkable choice to put money into the hands of ISIS, one of the world’s most barbaric terrorist organizations, so that it could continue selling cement,” said U.S. Attorney Breon Peace for the Eastern District of New York. “Lafarge did this not merely in exchange for permission to operate its cement plant – which would have been bad enough – but also to leverage its relationship with ISIS for economic advantage, seeking ISIS’s assistance to hurt Lafarge’s competition in exchange for a cut of Lafarge’s sales. Today, Lafarge has admitted and taken responsibility for its staggering crime. Never before has a corporation been charged with providing material support and resources to foreign terrorist organizations. This unprecedented charge and resolution reflect the extraordinary crimes committed and demonstrates that corporations that take actions in contravention of our national security interests in violation of the law will be held to account.”

“This guilty plea is a result of extraordinary collaboration among the FBI, the Department of Justice, and our international partners,” said FBI Deputy Director Paul Abbate. “The result demonstrates to anyone who would seek to contribute to ISIS’s terrorist activities, that the FBI will relentlessly pursue, and hold them accountable, regardless of where, or how, they attempt to hide.”



From August 2013 through October 2014, Lafarge and LCS paid ISIS and ANF, through intermediaries, the equivalent of approximately \$5.92 million, consisting of fixed monthly “donation” payments to ISIS and ANF, payments to ISIS-controlled suppliers to purchase raw materials, and variable payments based on the amount of cement LCS sold. Lafarge and LCS also paid the equivalent of approximately \$1.11 million to the third-party intermediaries for negotiating with and making payments to ISIS and ANF on Lafarge’s and LCS’s behalf. In addition, when LCS eventually evacuated the Jalabiyeh Cement Plant in September 2014, ISIS took possession of cement that LCS had produced in furtherance of the conspiracy, and ISIS sold the cement at prices that would have yielded ISIS approximately \$3.21 million. As a result of the scheme, LCS obtained approximately \$70.30 million in total sales revenue from August 2013 through 2014. The gains to all participants in the conspiracy, including LCS, the intermediaries and the terrorist groups, totaled approximately \$80.54 million.

Lafarge and LCS executives actively concealed their scheme to provide material support to ISIS and ANF. For example:

- Lafarge and LCS executives required intermediaries to create business entities with names not obviously linked to the intermediaries and created invoices with false descriptions of services rendered for an intermediary to submit to LCS.
- LCS executives structured the revenue-sharing payments to ISIS so that LCS’s customers would pay ISIS the amounts owed under LCS’s agreement with ISIS, while LCS discounted the prices it charged to the customers to reimburse them. To ensure that LCS’s customers did not underpay ISIS, LCS agreed to provide ISIS with periodic sales reports, which ISIS could use to verify that LCS’s customers were paying the amounts owed under the terms of LCS’s agreement with ISIS.
- To further conceal the arrangements, Lafarge and LCS executives attempted to require ISIS not to include the name “Lafarge” on the documents memorializing and implementing their agreements.
- Many of the Lafarge and LCS executives involved in the scheme used personal email addresses, rather than their corporate email addresses, to carry out of the conspiracy.
- In October 2014, as a condition of paying an intermediary for having negotiated with ISIS and other armed groups, Lafarge and LCS executives required the intermediary to sign an agreement terminating his agreement to provide services to LCS. Critically, the Lafarge and LCS executives backdated the termination agreement to Aug. 18, 2014, a date shortly after the United Nations Security Council had issued a resolution calling on member states to prohibit doing business with ISIS and ANF, to falsely suggest that he had not been negotiating with ISIS on behalf of LCS after the U.N. resolution.

Lafarge was eventually acquired by a competitor (the Successor Company) in a transaction that closed on July 10, 2015. Lafarge executives did not disclose LCS’s payments to ISIS and ANF to the Successor Company during pre-acquisition diligence meetings, and the Successor Company conducted neither pre- nor post-acquisition due diligence of LCS’s operations in Syria, which had terminated by the time the transaction closed. Lafarge, LCS and the Successor Company also did not self-report the conduct or fully cooperate in the investigation.

Lafarge and its subsidiary pleaded guilty to conspiring to provide material support to designated foreign terrorist organizations and admitted to negotiating with and paying armed groups and terrorists, negotiating revenue-sharing agreements with ISIS to seek economic advantage, and concealing their payments, falsified records, and backdated contracts.

The FBI’s New York Joint Terrorism Task Force is investigating the case. The Justice Department’s Office of International Affairs provided critical assistance in this case. The Department also appreciates the significant cooperation and assistance provided by the French, Moroccan and Lebanese authorities.

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**Suspicious, Unusual**

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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Seattle leaders fight over policing pirates</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thestranger.com/news/2022/10/18/78624696/city-leaders-fight-over-policing-pirates">https://www.thestranger.com/news/2022/10/18/78624696/city-leaders-fight-over-policing-pirates</a>
GIST	<p>I kid you not, in the year 2022 we have elected officials and policy staff for the Mayor of a major US city arguing about how to respond to “sea burglars” allegedly pillaging houseboats on Lake Union.</p> <p>At last Thursday’s budget meeting, mayoral staff and SPD representatives resisted a request to shift aquatic emergency response calls from the cops to the fire department to save some of the \$250,000 that the Mayor wants to spend on cop boats and their captains. The clash represents yet another instance of the cops and the Mayor slowing attempts to solve staffing <a href="#">problems</a> amid a nationwide police shortage.</p> <p><b>More Mayoral Foot-dragging on Common Sense Alternatives</b></p> <p>As with every attempt to shift any low-level task out of SPD’s scope of work, the labor union representing Seattle’s police officers remains an obstacle. At the meeting, as soon as the Council’s budget chair, Teresa Mosqueda, brought up the idea of moving search-and-rescue efforts to the Seattle Fire Department, SPD Chief Adrian Diaz reminded the Council that doing so would require getting agreement from the Seattle Police Officers Guild (SPOG) and the union representing the firefighters.</p> <p>But Mosqueda wasn’t born yesterday. She told Diaz that the Council asked for SPD and SFD to figure out those labor issues more than two years ago. Council Member Lisa Herbold, who chairs the public safety committee, also chimed in to remind the Chief that SPD and SFD have figured out similar issues with their labor unions in the past.</p> <p>If the Harrell administration was more serious about pushing forward police alternatives than its predecessors in Mayor Jenny Durkan’s shop, then they could easily back this move as evidence of their commitment to moving forward with this council in good faith. But Senior Deputy Mayor Monisha Harrell only offered that they’re “continuing to have those discussions.”</p> <p>In lieu of offering any substantive update on those discussions, Harrell chose this moment to focus on vague reports of people robbing houseboats and then paddling away as justification for increasing funds for cop boats. SPD Chief Diaz also told the Council that cops don’t always know whether a search-and-rescue call involves a potential crime, and so SPD needs to respond to those calls just in case a crime was committed.</p> <p>Neither Harrell nor Diaz provided any data to quantify the number of scalawags who have made off with houseboat booty so far in 2022, or whether these recent reports of piracy reflect an increase in water-borne thievery compared to recent years.</p> <p>That dismissal without supporting data seemed to break something in Council Member Andrew Lewis, who represents downtown. He said the quiet part out loud by clarifying that the Council’s request was rooted in the reality that we simply don’t have enough cops to respond to all calls for service, and that shifting these tasks to SFD wasn’t an attempt to replace the police department’s involvement in securing Seattle’s waterways entirely.</p> <p><b>We’re Really Fighting about Much More than Pirates</b></p> <p>Aside from the spat over the harbor patrol line item, for the rest of the hearing the Council mostly refrained from grilling the Mayor’s staff or SPD about their proposed budget. The conflict over the more expensive proposals will come to a head in the coming weeks, as the Council releases proposed amendments to the Mayor’s budget.</p> <p>What’s already clear from SPD’s presentation, however, is that the cops still refuse to live in reality.</p> <p>They’re projecting that the department will somehow hire 120 new officers in both 2023 and 2024, though Chief Diaz did not provide any details on how he plans to nearly <a href="#">quadruple</a> the 35 new hires the department has made so far this year. At the same time, SPD’s budget projections include an estimated 105 officers leaving the force during each of the next two years, for a net increase of just 15 more cops per year</p>

through 2024. That would bring SPD up to 1,080 officers by 2024, which is “the lowest I’ve seen our department,” according to remarks Chief Diaz [made](#) to the Police Executive Research Forum in 2021.

If the cause of Seattle’s public safety crisis is too few police officers, the Mayor’s budget won’t solve that problem. And yet, at every turn, when the Council has proposed [lightening workloads](#) to help retain overworked cops, SPD has [dragged its feet](#) or given [vague objections](#) for why the proposal at hand won’t work.

Eventually, the City must find a way to meet its charter obligation to provide public safety for Seattle’s residents. If Mayor Harrell can’t convince SPD to support alternative responses so cops can focus on [rape investigations](#), then he may end up being Seattle’s next one-term mayor. A recent poll showed his approval rating on crime and public safety underwater by 14 points, with [most Seattle residents](#) preferring accountability and prevention programs to crackdowns.

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HEADLINE	10/19 First Asian American on US currency
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/10/19/anna-may-wong-us-currency-quarter/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/10/19/anna-may-wong-us-currency-quarter/</a>
GIST	<p>The first piece of U.S. currency to carry the likeness of an Asian American will begin shipping on Monday, according to the U.S. Mint.</p> <p>On the tails side of a new quarter will be the Chinese American actress Anna May Wong, chin resting on her hand, framed by the “bright lights of a marquee sign,” the Mint said. Wong’s coin is the fifth in a <a href="#">series</a> of quarters to feature prominent American women. There has been “overwhelming demand” and most of the <a href="#">coins</a> are already sold out, according to the Mint’s website.</p> <p>Wong is regarded as Hollywood’s first Asian American movie star. The third-generation American’s career took off at a time of widespread anti-Asian xenophobia, with the <a href="#">Chinese Exclusion Act</a> still in effect. She gained fame for her roles in silent films like <a href="#">“The Toll of the Sea”</a> (1922) — one of the first Technicolor movies — and “The Thief of Bagdad” (1924).</p> <p>But as an Asian woman, she was often relegated to playing the villain, the enslaved person or the maid, so much so that she has often been referred to as “the actress who died a thousand deaths.” In “The Toll,” Wong played a villager who rescues a White soldier from the ocean. (He leaves and returns with a White wife, distressing Wong’s character, Lotus Flower.)</p> <p>“I was so tired of the parts I had to play,” Wong said in a 1933 interview, <a href="#">according</a> to the Los Angeles Times. “Why is it that the screen Chinese is nearly always the villain of the piece, and so cruel a villain — murderous, treacherous, a snake in the grass. We are not like that.”</p> <p>While Wong was hailed for her beauty, the compliment usually came with the disclaimers that she was “exotic” or “oriental.”</p> <p>She tried to break out from playing the antagonist but met resistance, in part due to <a href="#">restrictions on interracial displays of affection</a>. Wong vied for the starring role of O-Lan in the 1937 film “The Good Earth” but was instead offered the role of Lotus, a sex worker who becomes the concubine of O-Lan’s husband.</p> <p>She declined, refusing to be the sole Asian cast member — lead roles were given to White actors — in the “only unsympathetic role,” she <a href="#">said</a>. The White actress who was cast as O-Lan, Luise Rainer, <a href="#">won the Academy Award for Best Actress</a> for her role in the film.</p> <p>“Wong sought to be valued as an actress, a woman with vision and ambition, and an American, all at a time when U.S. society could not imagine a Chinese American woman beyond the limits of racialized and gendered stereotypes of Asian women as exotic and foreign,” said Karen Leong, a professor of Asian</p>

Pacific American studies at Arizona State University and the author of [a book on prominent Asian American women](#), including Wong.

Wong's career and visibility as an actor and celebrity were "unique for Asian American women of her time," Leong added.

"As the first Chinese American film star in Hollywood, she faced constant discrimination, frequently being typecast and passed over for lead roles in favor of non-Asian actresses," Rep. Ted Lieu (D-Calif.) said in a statement Tuesday. "She is remembered not only as a great actress, but also as an advocate for increased representation of Asian Americans in film and media."

Though Wong, born in Los Angeles in 1905 as Wong Liu Tsong, disliked the roles she was cast in, they also caused problems for her with the Chinese American community, as well as in China. She was criticized at home for perpetuating stale and demeaning stereotypes, and in China, where she toured after "The Good Earth" debacle, she was seen as too American.

The new quarter is not the first major recognition of Wong's legacy. She was the first Asian American actress to get a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, in 1960. Nearly six decades later, Lucy Liu became the second. Liu cited the contributions of Wong — whom she [called](#) "a pioneer while enduring racism, marginalization, and exclusion" — as a factor behind her success.

Wong is the subject of an upcoming biopic, starring actress Gemma Chan, who gained international fame in "Crazy Rich Asians" (2018), one of the most successful Hollywood films with a majority-Asian cast.

Chan said in [a statement](#) when the biopic was announced that the "challenges and prejudice [Wong] faced in the early 20th century as an actress speak directly to the conversations and the world we are navigating today." The British actress also paid homage to Wong with her [2021 Met Gala look](#).

Wong died in 1961 at the age of 56. Though a century has passed since she appeared in "The Toll," Asian Americans are still underrepresented in American films. According to a 2021 [survey](#) by the University of Southern California of 1,300 popular films from 2007 to 2019, only 29 featured an Asian lead or co-lead, and 21 had a Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander lead or co-lead, totaling just over 3 percent of the films examined. Asians and Pacific Islanders make up more than 6 percent of the U.S. population, according to 2020 census figures.

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HEADLINE	10/19 Melting glaciers to release next pandemic?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/science/2022/oct/19/next-pandemic-may-come-from-melting-glaciers-new-data-shows">https://www.theguardian.com/science/2022/oct/19/next-pandemic-may-come-from-melting-glaciers-new-data-shows</a>
GIST	<p>The next pandemic may come not from bats or birds but from matter in melting ice, according to new data.</p> <p>Genetic analysis of soil and lake sediments from Lake Hazen, the largest high Arctic freshwater lake in the world, suggests the risk of viral spillover – where a virus infects a new host for the first time – may be higher close to melting glaciers.</p> <p>The findings imply that as global temperatures rise owing to climate change, it becomes more likely that viruses and bacteria locked up in glaciers and permafrost could reawaken and infect local wildlife, particularly as their range also shifts closer to the poles.</p> <p>For instance, in 2016 an <a href="#">outbreak of anthrax in northern Siberia</a> that killed a child and infected at least seven other people was attributed to a heatwave that melted permafrost and exposed an infected reindeer carcass. Before this, the last outbreak in the region had been in 1941.</p>

To better understand the risk posed by frozen viruses, Stéphane Aris-Brosou and her colleagues at the University of Ottawa in Canada collected soil and sediment samples from Lake Hazen, close to where small, medium and large amounts of meltwater from local glaciers flowed in.

Next, they sequenced RNA and DNA in these samples to identify signatures closely matching those of known viruses, as well as potential animal, plant or fungal hosts, and ran an algorithm that assessed the chance of these viruses infecting unrelated groups of organisms.

The research, published in [Proceedings of the Royal Society B](#), suggested that the risk of viruses spilling over to new hosts was higher at locations close to where large amounts of glacial meltwater flowed in – a situation that becomes more likely as the climate warms.

The team did not quantify how many of the viruses they identified were previously unknown – something they plan to do in the coming months – nor did they assess whether these viruses were capable of triggering an infection.

However, other recent research has suggested that unknown viruses can, and do, loiter in glacier ice. For instance, last year, researchers at Ohio State University in the US [announced](#) they had found genetic material from 33 viruses – 28 of them novel – in ice samples taken from [the Tibetan plateau](#) in China. Based on their location, the viruses were estimated to be approximately 15,000 years old.

In 2014, scientists at France’s National Centre for Scientific Research in Aix-Marseille managed to revive a [giant virus](#) they isolated from Siberian permafrost, making it infectious again for the first time in 30,000 years. The study’s author, Jean-Michel Claverie, told the BBC at the time that exposing such ice layers could be “a recipe for disaster”.

Even so, Aris-Brosou’s team cautioned that predicting a high risk of spillover was not the same as predicting actual spillovers or pandemics. “As long as viruses and their ‘bridge vectors’ are not simultaneously present in the environment, the likelihood of dramatic events probably remains low,” they wrote.

On the other hand, climate change is predicted to alter the range of existing species, potentially bringing new hosts into contact with ancient viruses or bacteria.

“The only take-home that we can confidently put forward is that as temperatures are rising, the risk of spillover in this particular environment is increasing,” said Aris-Brosou. “Will this lead to pandemics? We absolutely don’t know.”

Also unclear is whether the potential for host switching identified in Lake Hazen is unique within lake sediments. “For all we know, it could be the same as the likelihood of host switching posed by viruses from the mud in your local pond,” said Arwyn Edwards, the director of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Environmental Microbiology at Aberystwyth University.

However, “we do urgently need to explore the microbial worlds all over our planet to understand these risks in context,” he said. “Two things are very clear now. Firstly, that the Arctic is warming rapidly and the major risks to humanity are from its influence on our climate. Secondly, that diseases from elsewhere are finding their way into the vulnerable communities and ecosystems of the Arctic.”

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HEADLINE	10/18 Biggest bony fish ever caught?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/science/giant-sunfish-record-azores.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/science/giant-sunfish-record-azores.html</a>
GIST	It was easy for scientists to have doubts when they were told that the carcass of a colossal fish had been found floating just off the coast of Faial Island in Portugal’s Azores archipelago in the Mid-Atlantic Ocean in December 2021. People do tend to exaggerate when it comes to the size of fish after all. However, their



skepticism lifted the moment they laid eyes on the fish. It was the biggest bony fish they had ever seen. In fact, it might have been the biggest anyone had ever seen.

Weighing just over 6,000 pounds, which is around the weight of a Chevrolet Suburban, the supersize southern sunfish stretches over 10 feet in length. Scientists say the fish, a species of mola, was the heaviest bony fish ever recorded.

Over 90 percent of fish have bony skeletons and thus fall into the category of bony fish. This sets them apart from sharks, rays and some fish that have cartilaginous skeletons. Although no bony fish has ever come close to reaching the size of a whale shark, the largest cartilaginous fish, the size of the sunfish found in the Azores is impressive.

“It’s pretty rare to find big fish these days due to overfishing and habitat degradation,” said Kory Evans, a fish ecologist at Rice University who was not involved in the discovery of the S.U.V.-size sunfish.

The last bony fish recorded anywhere near that size was a female of the same species caught in Japan in 1996 that weighed around 5,070 pounds and measured roughly 8.9 feet across.

The massive southern sunfish found in the Azores is “not an abnormal individual whose extreme size is due to a genetic mutation,” said José Nuno Gomes-Pereira, a marine biologist with Atlantic Naturalist and co-author of a [study](#) published earlier this month in Journal of Fish Biology that documented the specimen. “This species can get to this size. We just finally managed to weigh and measure one. There are more of these monsters out there.”

Aside from their size, molas are known for their clumsy swimming style. Unlike most fish, molas use their dorsal and anal fins to propel their huge, hulking bodies through the water, which they do slowly and haphazardly. The open-ocean fish are often seen floating on their sides at the sea’s surface, which scientists think is to warm up or to make it easy for seabirds to make a meal of the parasites on their skin.

After local fishermen and boaters found the southern sunfish floating near the Azores, a group of scientists from the research nonprofit Atlantic Naturalist and the local marine wildlife authorities towed its body into Horta Harbor and hoisted it onto land using a forklift.

Dr. Gomes-Pereira and his colleagues spent several hours measuring the length, weight and stomach contents of the fish. The mola’s nearly eight-inch thick skin made the dissection particularly tricky. And because the fish was too large for any local museum to preserve, it was buried on a nearby hillside.

The scientists weren’t able to determine the exact age of the fish, but Dr. Gomes-Pereira believes the creature was at least two decades old. Estimates suggest that is around the limit of their life span, but no one really knows how long these animals can live.

This particular fish’s life may have been cut short. While examining the fish, Dr. Gomes-Pereira noticed a large contusion on the side of the animal’s head. That could be a sign that the fish was hit by a boat. The scientists believe the boaters in the Azores need to slow down and be more mindful of their impact on ocean wildlife.

At the same time, Dr. Gomes-Pereira hopes that the discovery of this fish shows people that the ocean is still healthy enough to support the largest animals on the planet, as well as inspire them to do more to protect it. “It’s a warning for us in terms of the need for further conservation measures,” he said.

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## Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE
10/19 Dismembered bodies 4 Oklahoma men



SOURCE	<a href="https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/19/us/oklahoma-dismembered-bodies-investigation-wednesday/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2022/10/19/us/oklahoma-dismembered-bodies-investigation-wednesday/index.html</a>
GIST	<p>Investigators are following leads every day to find out how <a href="#">dismembered bodies of four men</a> ended up in an Oklahoma river, but whenever water is involved, it makes it much more difficult to identify evidence, the police chief said.</p> <p>The men – Mark Chastain, 32; Billy Chastain, 30; Mike Sparks, 32; and Alex Stevens, 29 – were reported missing by relatives after leaving Billy Chastain’s Okmulgee, Oklahoma, home on bicycles the evening of October 9, police have said.</p> <p>Days later, <a href="#">their bodies were found</a> – all of them having been shot and dismembered – in a river outside Okmulgee, a city of about 11,000 people roughly a 35-mile drive south of Tulsa.</p> <p>Okmulgee Police Chief Joe Prentice described there being a “very violent event,” as he announced Monday the missing persons case had turned into a murder investigation.</p> <p>A man who was named as a <a href="#">person of interest</a> in the gruesome killings, 67-year-old Joe Kennedy, was taken into custody Tuesday in Florida on an unrelated charge of grand theft of a motor vehicle and is being held with no bond, authorities said. He is also being held on a warrant issued for his arrest in Okmulgee County District Court in relation to a shooting in 2012.</p> <p>Kennedy has not been named a suspect in the killings. Police have said they want to speak him to again but have not specified why.</p> <p>It’s unclear whether Kennedy has an attorney. He’s set to appear before a Volusia County, Florida, judge Wednesday afternoon, according to the clerk of the courts.</p> <p>While it remains unclear exactly what led up to the men’s deaths, it appears they were planning to commit a crime when they left Billy Chastain’s home, Prentice said.</p> <p>That belief is based on “information supplied by a witness who reports they were invited to go with the men to quote, unquote, ‘Hit a lick big enough for all of them,’” the chief said Monday in a news conference. “That is common terminology for engaging in some type of criminal behavior, but we do not know what they were planning or where they planned to do it,” he added.</p> <p>As the investigation continues, the discovery of the dismembered bodies has raised more questions. Detectives, who have not recovered the firearm used in the killings, are contending with the difficult task of combing through the river.</p> <p><b>How water could affect the investigation</b></p> <p>All four bodies found in the river “were submerged in water for what appears to be an extended period of time,” Prentice previously <a href="#">told CNN</a>.</p> <p>That meant that the coroner faced greater difficulty identifying the bodies and police face a complicated investigation at the river, which “appears to be a dump site,” the chief said.</p> <p>“Water always affects decomposition, and depending on temperature, depending on the current flow, there’s a lot of different factors that do that,” Prentice said during a news conference Monday. “Whenever water is involved, it makes it much more difficult to identify evidence.”</p> <p>Prentice said investigators have to be more methodical as they sift through the water “because it’s so easy to miss evidence.”</p> <p>The chief said he’s never worked on a case with so many dismembered bodies, and it took several days to recover all the remains.</p>

“Although the official cause and manner of death is still pending, each victim suffered gunshot wounds,” Prentice said. “All four bodies were dismembered before being placed in the river.”

As the investigation continues, the chief said the department requested additional video surveillance from businesses in the area and continues to follow up on tips about different sightings.

As of Monday, police had not recovered any bicycles the men were riding when they left the home, the chief said.

#### **Police have location data from the men’s phones**

After the men were reported missing, police said they believed at least two of them were carrying cell phones.

Investigators traced the phones’ path, finding the devices went to two salvage yards – one about 5 miles from the river, and the other about 10 to 12 miles from the river, Prentice told CNN Saturday.

He cautioned that the phones’ paths didn’t necessarily have to be the path that the men traveled.

Police later found “evidence of a violent event” on a property adjoining one of those locations, the chief said without elaborating.

#### **The person of interest owns the salvage yards the phones were tracked to, police say**

Kennedy, the person of interest in the case, is the owner of the salvage yards, the chief said.

Police have said Kennedy denied knowing the men and he appeared cooperative with investigators during an interview Friday afternoon.

But the chief later announced Kennedy had gone missing.

Two days later, Kennedy was arrested in Daytona Beach Shores in a vehicle reported stolen Monday, Okmulgee Police said.

According to the arrest warrant in Florida, he was reported as a missing person, but Kennedy told officers he was not a missing person and was not in any danger.

#### **Family ‘shocked’ at the violent nature of the killings**

Jon Chastain, the uncle of Mark and Billy Chastain, told CNN their family was “shocked,” “outraged,” and filled with “heartbreak” when police announced the brothers, along with their two friends, were found murdered and dismembered.

Chastain said he could not envision his nephews doing anything to warrant so much violence.

The owner of two nearby salvage yards has been identified as a person of interest by police.

Mark was the father of two children, and Billy had four children. Chastain described them as hard workers and good fathers who loved their families.

“Whatever was going on, I don’t know. But what I do know is we need some justice for this,” Chastain said.

Mark Chastain’s wife, Jessica Chastain, told [CNN affiliate KOKI](#) she reported her husband missing the day he disappeared. Now, she says though her husband’s death still doesn’t feel real, she is focused on getting justice for him.

“Eventually the truth will come out. Eventually,” she said.

HEADLINE	10/18 DEA: 36M lethal fentanyl doses seized 5mo.
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.fox28spokane.com/dea-36-million-lethal-doses-of-fentanyl-removed-from-u-s-communities-from-may-to-september/">https://www.fox28spokane.com/dea-36-million-lethal-doses-of-fentanyl-removed-from-u-s-communities-from-may-to-september/</a>
GIST	<p>(The Center Square) – As a result of law enforcement operations from May through September of this year, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agents and law enforcement partners confiscated 36 million lethal doses of fentanyl, enough to kill 36 million Americans.</p> <p>As part of the DEA’s One Pill Can Kill initiative, DEA agents and law enforcement partners in multiple states seized more than 10.2 million fentanyl pills and approximately 980 pounds of fentanyl powder.</p> <p>Their operations took place between May 23 and Sept. 8, 2022. The operations saved the lives of at least 36 million people who might otherwise have been subjected to the lethal doses, the DEA estimates. Also during the operation, law enforcement officers confiscated 338 weapons, including rifles, shotguns, pistols, and hand grenades.</p> <p>Of the 390 cases investigated during this period, 51 cases were linked to overdose poisonings; 35 cases directly linked to one or both of the primary Mexican cartels responsible for the majority of fentanyl in the United States: the Sinaloa Cartel and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG).</p> <p>Last month, Texas Gov. Greg Abbott designated both cartels as international terrorist organizations and called on President Joe Biden to do the same. He also launched a public awareness campaign about the dangers of illicit fentanyl.</p> <p>Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody and 17 other attorneys general have called on the Biden administration to classify illicit fentanyl as a weapon of mass destruction.</p> <p>Both the DEA and Moody have been warning about Mexican cartels using social media and smart phone apps to target minors with “rainbow fentanyl” pills that look like candy but are deadly.</p> <p>Rainbow fentanyl was first reported to DEA in February 2022 and has been seized in 21 states, the agency says.</p> <p>As part of the DEA’s operation, 129 investigations were linked to social media platforms, including Snapchat, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, and TikTok.</p> <p>“Across the country, fentanyl is devastating families and communities, and we know that violent, criminal drug cartels bear responsibility for this crisis,” Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement. “The Justice Department, including the extraordinary professionals of the DEA, is working to disrupt and dismantle the operations of these cartels, remove deadly fentanyl from our communities, and save Americans’ lives.”</p> <p>“For the past year, confronting the fentanyl crisis has been the top priority for DEA. The most urgent threat to our communities, our kids, and our families are the Sinaloa Cartel and CJNG who are mass producing and supplying the fentanyl that is poisoning and killing Americans,” DEA Administrator Anne Milgram said. “The Sinaloa Cartel and CJNG are ruthless, criminal organizations that use deception and treachery to drive addiction with complete disregard for human life. To save American lives, the DEA is relentlessly focused on defeating the Sinaloa Cartel and CJNG by degrading their operations to make it impossible for them to do business.”</p> <p>The DEA says, “fentanyl remains the deadliest drug threat facing” America. In 2021, 107,622 Americans died from a drug poisoning or overdose; 66% of them were attributed to synthetic opioids like fentanyl.</p> <p>Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is 50 times more potent than heroin. Just two milligrams of fentanyl, the weight of a mosquito or the amount that can fit on the tip of a pencil, is considered a lethal dose.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/18 Australia: new imitation ketamine on market
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.vice.com/en/article/5d3jp5/scientists-discover-imitation-ketamine-on-the-market">https://www.vice.com/en/article/5d3jp5/scientists-discover-imitation-ketamine-on-the-market</a>
GIST	<p>Australian scientists confirmed this week that they have detected a new recreational drug that has never been seen in the country before: a substance with chemical qualities similar to ketamine but reportedly with different effects.</p> <p>The dissociative was first detected in mid-August, after an individual brought a small bag of white crystals and powder to a team of researchers at Australia's first government-backed pill and drug testing service, CanTEST, in the capital Canberra. The client had originally thought the substance was ketamine, but said the effects “were very different to what they expected.” They asked the staff at the clinic to take a closer look.</p> <p>“The expectation was ketamine, so we ran it through the testing equipment that we have on site,” Malcolm McLeod, associate professor at the Australian National University's (ANU) research school of chemistry, told VICE World News.</p> <p>These initial tests quickly ruled out the possibility of ketamine—and subsequent lab tests revealed that the white powder was, in fact, a structurally similar substance that had been synthesised, somewhere, from scratch. It was, researchers concluded, a mysterious new synthetic drug, which they have now dubbed CanKet.</p> <p>“It's a bit hard at that stage to exactly know what it is. So it's an unknown in that sense,” McLeod explained. “It's an entirely different chemical [to ketamine], and a fairly new chemical. It's one that's only been described in very, very recent times... and as far as we're aware, it's never been detected in Australia before.”</p> <p>Around the same time the CanKet tests were taking place, a team of researchers in China published a <a href="#">research paper</a> highlighting the “identification of three novel new psychoactive substances”—one of which was CanKet, or 2F-NENDCK, as the Chinese scientists referred to it. The authors of that report suggested that the new ketamine-like substance was probably created to get around prohibitive legislation, noting that it was structurally similar to another designer drug, NENK, which is also believed to have similar properties to ketamine and is listed in China's illicit drugs catalogue.</p> <p>McLeod said that he believes CanKet, which is illegal in Australia due to it being a ketamine analog, is “quite likely to have been imported” from a country with less stringent laws and regulations. In the two months since its first detection, he added, it has appeared at the testing clinic “four or five times.”</p> <p>“Sometimes the client's kept it, sometimes they've discarded it, sometimes they've been very surprised that it's not ketamine,” he said. He also pointed out that, “We don't know much about its effects,” noting that reports from users have differed and are “often quite subjective and a bit hard to unravel exactly what's going on.”</p> <p>“I don't think I can give you a straightforward answer about what this drug is like,” he said. “What does it do to people? What effect does it have? We don't really know, would be a straightforward answer.”</p> <p>One user VICE World News spoke to on condition of anonymity described it as feeling “very similar to ketamine, but not as deep or introspective.”</p> <p>“I've bought ket three times in a row now and it's been 2F-NENDCK,” said Hunter, a pseudonym, who lives in Canberra and used the CanTEST service to determine the true identity of his pseudo ketamine each time. “I'd say it's worse [than ketamine] but only slightly... The ‘happy’ feeling was lacking a little bit. I find I snort K and a smile forms on my face when it starts kicking in. This was lacking that—I'd just come up and kinda stay in a mundane headspace while feeling wonky.”</p>

He also pointed out that while the drug feels different to ketamine, it's similar enough that an "amateur dissociative user won't be able to tell the difference." And while scientists and researchers have only detected the drug in Canberra thus far, VICE World News was told it's already spread interstate.

"It's not just limited to the Canberra market," said Hunter. "One of the batches I bought was at a festival/doof in the Blue Mountains, in New South Wales, off someone from Melbourne [in Victoria]—so it's all around and not just in Canberra."

While the potential dangers are as yet unknown, experts have already flagged concerns about the risks of such a mysterious, unstudied drug being so readily available to consumers—especially those who assume they're getting ketamine, a relatively safe substance in the narcotics taxonomy.

In a statement provided to VICE World News, David Caldicott, associate professor from ANU, said, "While it would be fair to say we understand ketamine very well as a drug, we literally have no other data as to what the acute or chronic effects of this close cousin might be. And that is disconcerting."

"Assuming that it is 'safe' because it appears related to ketamine would be an error of judgement."

McLeod expressed similar concerns, explaining that even seemingly subtle changes to a substance's chemical structure can cause dramatic changes to the way it affects the human body. He pointed to amphetamine, a relatively widespread and well-understood drug that is commonly used in ADHD medications like Adderrall and Dexedrine, among other things. McLeod explains that all it takes is a "pretty modest change" to that drug's chemical structure to create PMA, otherwise known as Dr Death—a designer drug with similar effects to ecstasy, but less euphoric, more poisonous, and can kill at lower doses.

"Really small changes can have quite large effects, which is why we're concerned," said McLeod. "We could have a scenario where a relatively new substance like this causes real harm."

Many experts agree that the best way to mitigate such dangers is to have more drug testing services like CanTEST, and to make them more readily available to people who are going to take illicit substances. In its first month of operation, CanTEST [examined 58 samples](#) of a range of different drugs. From those results, researchers found that only 60 percent of "cocaine" samples actually contained cocaine, just over 65 percent of MDMA samples contained MDMA, and a number of drugs were cut with adulterants like dimethyl sulfone, sugar, and talc. Eighteen people discarded their drugs once the results were in.

"Really, the way to tackle this issue is to provide them with some information so that they can make informed decisions," said McLeod. "We do hear a lot about seizures at the border, and so on, which is great—but clearly it's not catching everything."

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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Libraries increase security amid threats</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.vice.com/en/article/g5vmp4/libraries-are-beefing-up-security-after-a-series-of-violent-threats">https://www.vice.com/en/article/g5vmp4/libraries-are-beefing-up-security-after-a-series-of-violent-threats</a>
GIST	<p>In September, library systems in Hawaii, Utah, Colorado, Texas, Tennessee, Massachusetts, and other states were <a href="#">forced to closed temporarily after receiving shooting and bomb threats</a>. While the threats were ultimately determined to be non-credible, the unusual pattern of incidents has left library workers reconsidering their safety on the job—and wondering how to respond in the future.</p> <p>The threats come at a time when libraries have become an unwitting political battleground—from <a href="#">book bans</a> to <a href="#">anti-LGBTQ harassment</a> by far-right groups. The American Library Association (ALA) has asked FBI director Christopher Wray to investigate whether there is any connection between the recent threats, but little remains known about whether the events are part of a coordinated effort to disrupt services.</p> <p>Responses to these threats have varied widely, from closing facilities and alerting the public to maintaining normal operations and letting all staff know days later. Some library workers worry that there</p>

seems to be little to no consensus on how library systems are supposed to handle violent threats made against them.

Lessa Pelayo-Lozada, 2022-23 president of the ALA and assistant manager for adult services at the Palos Verdes Library District in California, says the ALA doesn't have any specific guidance on how a library should handle these types of threats.

"All of our libraries are very localized institutions," Pelayo-Lozada told Motherboard. "The resources that they have available to them, the political arenas that they are living in, and how they operate are all very different."

Pelayo-Lozada says the ALA encourages library systems to have policies and procedures in place so that staff are aware of what the process looks like, should they receive a violent threat in the instance they are on the receiving end.

"What we are encouraging folks to do is to just really share those plans with their staff as broadly as possible," she added. "They have to work with their local security, with their local police, with their local protective units to be able to figure out what that process looks like for them and what the best practices are for the community that they're living in."

These plans can look dramatically different depending on the library's location and the types of communities it serves. In some places, [libraries have faced backlash](#) for displaying LGBTQ-supportive titles, and [anti-LGBTQ groups have sprung up](#) in many areas that attempt to remove titles they find objectionable from shelves—in many cases, successfully. In June, Motherboard reported that [library users often distrust local law enforcement](#) to take care of potential threats such as protests of LGBTQ-themed events. Some supporters have formed community defense groups and [taken matters into their own hands](#).

"I understand that these were hoax bomb threats, but given the climate and all the stuff that staff have encountered from anti-mask protests to First Amendment auditors, and now this, it's draining morale and eroding trust in leadership," Maty Cropley, president of the Boston Public Library Professional Staff Association told Motherboard.

Cropley says that people tend to be more frightened because they don't feel confident that they know enough about how to respond in different situations.

"Setting aside communicating what happened to people, I think the response is to provide training and education and awareness and information for staff on how to react to these types of situations," Cropley added. "This is a time when we should be engaging with training, practice, drills—that kind of stuff. Safety is a practice."

Although the ALA does not have a set of policies and procedures for library safety and security, the organization does work with a handful of consultants who specialize in library security. Steve Albrecht, according to many, is one of the only games in town. He says that the more detailed a threat, the more likely it is to be credible, but does not advocate for closing a facility if a threat is received.

"We find out about bombs in this country after they go off and lots of people make bomb threats, whether or no bombs, and I think we overreact to bomb threats because we are in condition to shut down," Albrecht, a former police officer, told Motherboard. "I don't mean we don't look for a real device or don't pay attention or don't call the police. But I'm saying it's not always our first option."

Albrecht advocates for librarians to undergo training that teaches them how to work with law enforcement. He says he advises the library director, security manager, facilities director and a department head who needs to make decisions on behalf of the staff to know about and respond to an incident.

"I'm trying to make it so that people want to feel safe and enjoy their jobs and feel like they have some tools," he added. "That their management has the facts and understands what they're trying to do."



Not everyone is on board with involving the cops, however. Librarians have a [long history of resisting police surveillance](#), and many are inherently distrustful of solutions that involve creating a police presence. Christian Zabriskie, executive director of the Onondaga County Public Library in Syracuse and founder of Urban Libraries Unite, has been trying to deescalate the presence of security guards in the library system by replacing them with a community engagement team that serves what he calls a high needs community.

“We had level security guards who are actually, you know, carrying firearms and are armed security responders. We had a community engagement team and we had a police presence,” Zabriskie told Motherboard. “As I looked at it, I realized that the most effective group was our community engagement team who are trained in de-escalation.”

The community engagement team at Onondaga County Public Library comes out of a local group called the Street Addiction Institute—an organization that works to address the root causes of neighborhood violence. Zabriskie was inspired by Ryan Dowd’s *The Librarian’s Guide to Homelessness: An Empathy-Driven Approach to Solving Problems, Preventing Conflict, and Serving Everyone* which offers advice to library workers who have frequent contact with homeless patrons.

“We’re spending over half a million dollars a year on this and it’s worth it because we are seeing results,” he said. “We have had a total of six incidents across 11 locations over three months, and we write up everything.”

Zabriskie believes the Onondaga County Public Library has been successful because they have a clear policy around threats that includes things like verbal abuse that puts staff treatment first.

“I’m okay with people who are disrupting the rules and harassing people and making it an unsafe space, feeling that they’re not welcome in the library,” he said. “I don’t really have a problem with that, but some people in my profession feel that everyone should always be welcome and you always get all the chances that you want. And unfortunately, you know, that’s kind of led to a space where a lot of times our staff are not necessarily the first things that are taken into consideration when we look at security and libraries, and I think that’s really too bad.”

Pelayo-Lozada says that she and president-elect Emily Drabinski are working to strengthen the ALA-Allied Professional Association—a 501(c)6 that provides professional development certifications around security, mental health and salaries among other issues specific to modern librarianship.

“We do emphasize that everything is very localized, just like with book censorship, but you know, with book censorship we do also have some best practices that go along with that, and so we’re hoping to start working on a lot of those things to be able to support our members and our library workers in the near future,” said Pelayo-Lozada.

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HEADLINE	10/18 King Co. to end warrant checks jail visitors?
SOURCE	<a href="https://mynorthwest.com/3677381/rantz-king-county-warrant-checks-jail-visitors-union/">https://mynorthwest.com/3677381/rantz-king-county-warrant-checks-jail-visitors-union/</a>
GIST	<p>King County may end criminal warrant checks on jail visitors in the latest move to assuage criminal justice reform activists. But the King County Corrections Guild (KCCG) is sounding the alarm, warning this is dangerous.</p> <p>When visitors come to the jail, corrections officers check them for arrest warrants for criminal law violations, domestic violence no-contacts, and protection orders. This policy is meant to ensure the safety of the staff and the incarcerated individual.</p> <p>Dennis Folk, president of the KCCG, tells the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH that they’ve made several arrests when suspects with warrants show up at the jails.</p>

“We’ve arrested people on a number of violent offenses, you know, DOC escape charges, you know, people that have absconded from their parole,” Folk said.

“In my career, in 25 years, I’ve probably arrested a dozen or more people myself in visiting,” Folk added.

### **Why the policy change?**

According to Folk, he was told that the county “did not want to discourage families from seeing each other if one has a warrant.” He said the DADJ goal is to help facilitate “relationships with the family so when they [inmates] get released, they can get back into the community with support from family.”

While family support helps suspects and felons get their lives in order, family members with active warrants for their arrest might not offer the best support. And Folk said this is a clear danger. He worries that gang members will make more visits to help coordinate future crimes or to intimidate someone into silence. He’s particularly worried about domestic violence victims.

Folk said he was alerted to the policy shift by Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention (DADJ) director Allen Nance. After consulting with the guild board and their attorney, the union president emailed Nancy to express his “serious concerns with this decision.”

“Not only do we check for arrest warrants for criminal law violations, but we check for domestic violence no-contact, and protection orders also ensure that people are not violating the judge’s conditions in those orders,” Folk wrote in an email provided to the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH. “These orders are issued by the courts to secure someone’s safety. As you know, DV no-contact orders are issued by a judge to forbid an individual from contacting another, and we must ensure that those orders are not violated. Not only do we have a fundamental responsibility to ensure that those in our custody remain safe and that their Constitutional Rights are not violated, but we also have a responsibility to protect the citizens of King County.

“This means if a judge has ordered someone’s arrest that we follow that judge’s order and bring them before the court. We also must protect those who may be victims of domestic violence and enforce the court’s issued no-contact orders,” Folk continued.

Nance did not respond to a request for comment made through his office.

### **Executive says this didn’t come from his office**

A spokesperson for King County Executive Dow Constantine offered some context to the decision.

“This policy is under consideration by the department as they look to minimize staffing disruption in preparation for returning to in-person visitation. This evaluation did not come at the direction of the Executive or our office,” the spokesperson explained.

Folk stated using staffing as an excuse is just a cover. He says that, no matter the policy, they’ll always need two corrections officers at the check-in window.

“I can’t see how this is going to change our staffing or affect our staffing in any way,” Folk said.

### **How other jails handle the issue**

Pierce County jails check visitors for warrants. It’s a matter of public safety, Pierce County Sheriff’s Deputy Darren Moss explains.

“The jail is a controlled facility and we can’t just let anyone in to talk to people who are in custody,” Moss told the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH. “Their phone lines are recorded and we document who visits in person. If someone is locked up for domestic violence charges, it would be best not to have the victim visiting the offender, especially if there is a protection order in place. If the court issues warrants, it means a judge wants them to be brought before the court or taken into custody. Our job is to help catch those

people with outstanding warrants and bring them before the court. It would be weird to let people we are looking for come into our facility and leave.”

In Snohomish County, however, the jail does not check for warrants. Sheriff Adam Fortney tells the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH that they’ve not checked for at least a decade, though the current visitation is currently all remote.

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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Prisons, jails face sharp rise in suicides</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-prisons-jails-see-jump-in-suicides-11666098966?mod=hp_listb_pos3">https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-prisons-jails-see-jump-in-suicides-11666098966?mod=hp_listb_pos3</a>
GIST	<p>Suicides in prisons and jails across the U.S. have risen sharply over the past two years, data collected by The Wall Street Journal show, a trend that officials and inmate advocates say is driven in part by the increased isolation of inmates during the pandemic, more abuse of drugs <a href="#">including fentanyl</a> and staff shortages.</p> <p>In the Texas prison system last year, 61 inmates took their own lives, the most in two decades. In Louisiana, 13 state prison inmates died by suicide from January 2021 through the beginning of October, more than triple the number during the prior three years combined. Kentucky prisons have seen six suicides so far in 2022, compared with one last year.</p> <p>Local jails have seen a similar rise. At the Louisville, Ky., jail, five inmates killed themselves over the past 11 months, compared with none in 2018, 2019 and 2020. In New York City correctional facilities, <a href="#">which include Rikers Island</a>, one of the nation’s largest detention centers, there were four suicides in 2021 compared with one the prior two years.</p> <p>Prison and jail officials in several states said that they are making extensive efforts to assist offenders with mental health and self-harm issues and that rising suicides <a href="#">coincided with the onset of the pandemic</a>.</p> <p>In addition to being confined to their cells for extended time <a href="#">during Covid-19 outbreaks</a>, inmates often weren’t able to meet with family members as visits were curtailed during the pandemic.</p> <p>“The amount of isolation that people are experiencing is greater than before,” said Susan Pollitt, supervising attorney with Disability Rights North Carolina, an advocacy group focused on discrimination, abuse and other rights violations, including in prisons.</p> <p>Recent data from some prison and jail systems has shown suicide deaths increasing this year even as <a href="#">the pandemic has waned</a> and many facilities have restored visitation.</p> <p>Deaths by suicide are up in the general population as well. The suicide rate in the U.S. <a href="#">rose 4% in 2021</a>, after two years of decline, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>Dave Kratz, director of the Bucks County Department of Corrections in Pennsylvania, where three inmates died by suicide this year compared with one last year, said there are fewer corrections officers to deal with inmates <a href="#">addicted to powerful fentanyl-laced drugs</a> that have become more common in recent years.</p> <p>Out of every 400 new inmates, 250 to 280 require detox protocols that take about nine days, Mr. Kratz said, compared with two or three days in years past. At the same time, he has 70 vacancies for corrections officers, compared with 20 to 30 before the pandemic, resulting in more mandatory overtime.</p> <p>Mr. Kratz said he has converted 60 cells in the past several years to be suicide-resistant by taking away bedsheets and other measures. This week, he is opening a unit for up to 90 inmates who are in acute detox or a mental-health crisis so guards can check them more efficiently.</p>

“This is not a flash in the pan with these detoxes and mental-health issues,” Mr. Kratz said. “This is going to be with us for a while.”

Last December, Stephanie Dunbar, a Louisville jail inmate in detox, killed herself after being locked in a small holding room for 18 hours because there were no single cells available, according to the report of a city investigator and an attorney for Ms. Dunbar’s family.

The city investigator found that jail officers forged reports saying they checked on Ms. Dunbar as required when they hadn’t, and that she was never allowed to use a toilet or sink, among other failings. The investigator called the events surrounding Ms. Dunbar’s isolation a complete breakdown of the system.

In March, Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer appointed a new head of the city’s corrections department. Earlier this year, the mayor also hired a jail-safety consultant to conduct a review of the system. The consultant found that cells were poorly lighted and not suicide-resistant and that the department wasn’t tracking suicide deaths or attempts. He said the department should reduce its use of isolation cells.

Major Darrell Goodlett, a spokesman for the city corrections department, said it can’t comment on recent specific suicides because of ongoing litigation.

Major Goodlett said the new director recognizes that suicide is a serious threat and has made a number of changes, including renovating cells to make them more suicide-resistant, increasing mental-health services and suicide screening and appointing a psychologist to his senior staff. For the first time in several years, a psychiatric nurse practitioner and a psychiatrist are seeing inmates regularly, Major Goodlett said.

The surge in inmate suicides follows a steady rise for nearly two decades before the pandemic. According to a report released last year by the Justice Department’s Bureau of Justice Statistics, the number of suicides increased 85% in state prisons, 61% in federal prisons, and 13% in local jails from 2001 to 2019.

At the same time, federal prisons saw a decline in suicides this past fiscal year, which ended on Sept. 30, dropping to 18 from 33 in fiscal 2021. The federal Bureau of Prisons said its facilities had reduced the number of inmates housed in cells by themselves, which contributed to the decrease in suicides.

In Texas, inmate advocates say insufficient mental-health services and a staffing shortage have contributed to inmates spending more time in their cells. The 61 suicides in Texas prisons last year were up from 50 in 2020 and 35 in 2019.

Amanda Hernandez, a spokeswoman for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, said the department last fiscal year implemented a system to help identify inmates especially vulnerable to suicide and has created a network of offices dedicated to preventing self-harm.

The department currently has nearly 6,900 correctional-officer positions vacant, she said.

Sharon McKinney, executive director of the Texas Incarcerated Families Association, said inmates her group was in touch with were struggling to receive psychological help.

“This is a forgotten epidemic,” she said.

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HEADLINE	10/18 Flores convicted in Kristin Smart murder
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/us/paul-flores-guilty-kristin-smart.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/18/us/paul-flores-guilty-kristin-smart.html</a>
GIST	More than a quarter century after Kristin Smart, a California Polytechnic State University student, disappeared after an off-campus party, a jury in California on Tuesday convicted Paul Flores, a fellow student, of murdering her.

A separate jury found his father, Ruben Flores, 81, not guilty of helping to hide the body. Ms. Smart's remains have never been found.

The verdicts were announced in Monterey County Superior Court in Salinas, Calif., capping a long-running case that began on May 25, 1996, when Ms. Smart left an off-campus party around 2 a.m. accompanied by Paul Flores. He later told investigators that he had walked her as far as his dorm, where they parted ways.

Friends who spoke to investigators reported that she was intoxicated, and that Paul Flores repeatedly told them that he could accompany her to her dormitory alone, because she needed support to walk, court documents say.

Ms. Smart, a freshman who was 19, was never seen again. A missing persons report was filed three days later.

At a news conference on Tuesday attended by law enforcement officials, Ms. Smart's father, Stan Smart, said that while the split verdicts meant that his family's quest for justice would continue, he was grateful to the two juries.

He added that the case had been an "agonizingly long journey with more downs than ups," and that "without Kristin, there is no joy or happiness in this verdict."

Law enforcement officials noted the long pursuit of justice in the case.

Dan Dow, the San Luis Obispo County district attorney, said that "justice delayed is not justice denied." And Sheriff Ian Parkinson of San Luis Obispo County said that the case would not be over until Ms. Smart's remains are found and she is "returned home."

Robert Sanger, Paul Flores's lawyer, declined to comment on Tuesday. Ruben Flores and his lawyer, Harold Mesick, [told](#) local outlets on Tuesday that they were grateful for the jury's decision.

Paul Flores, 45, will face a sentence of 25 years to life in prison when he is sentenced on Dec. 9, prosecutors said.

After Ms. Smart's disappearance in 1996, the search for her ranged from remote areas of the campus to her dorm room in Muir Hall, where investigators found her wallet and reminders to turn in class work. A billboard seeking help in finding her was organized by her family. Paul Flores's dorm room was searched and he was interviewed by investigators.

Ms. Smart's family had their daughter declared legally dead in 2002.

Nearly two decades later, in 2021, the authorities described Paul Flores as a "[prime suspect](#)" and executed search warrants, including at his Los Angeles home. Investigators used dogs trained to detect human remains and ground-penetrating radar to search Ruben Flores's property in Arroyo Grande, Calif.

Paul Flores was taken into custody at his home in Los Angeles on April 13, 2021, and was charged with murder during a rape or attempted rape. Ruben Flores was arrested at his home and charged with being an accessory after the fact.

Mr. Dow, the San Luis Obispo County district attorney, said at the time that Paul Flores had "caused the death" of Ms. Smart "[while in the commission of, or attempted, rape.](#)" Ruben Flores helped to hide her remains, he said.

The trials of Paul and Ruben Flores were not live-streamed, but local media organizations covered them intensively over the last three months.

The trials had been moved about 140 miles north of San Luis Obispo to Monterey County, at the request of the defense team, because of the extensive publicity around the case.

In his closing argument earlier this month, a San Luis Obispo County prosecutor, Christopher Peuvrelle, [told the court](#) that Ruben Flores had helped his son by hiding Ms. Smart's body under the backyard deck of his house.

Mr. Peuvrelle cited soil samples, a 6-foot-by-4-foot anomaly in the ground, blood staining, fibers that matched Ms. Smart's clothing and alerts from cadaver dogs.

He also said that Paul Flores had been "hunting" Ms. Smart and had called his father to ask for help burying Ms. Smart's body. Robert Sanger, Paul Flores's lawyer, said there was a "missing person" but no evidence of a murder.

Harold Mesick, Ruben Flores's lawyer, said there was no evidence that his client had tried to hide the body, [KSBY reported](#).

"Paul Flores and his dad didn't bury this woman," Mr. Mesick said.

On Oct. 13, one juror in Ruben Flores's case was dismissed for asking his priest for guidance because of the stress he said he was enduring, and a new juror was sworn in, resetting the deliberations from the beginning, [KSBY reported](#).

In July, Ms. Smart's parents and her brother, Matt, testified about their search for Ms. Smart after she disappeared.

"For the next 25 years, I did whatever I could and looked for answers wherever I could," Denise Smart, Ms. Smart's mother, told the court, [according to the local CBS affiliate](#) in Sacramento.

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HEADLINE	10/18 ICE HSI targets organized retail theft
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/homeland-security-cracking-down-on-organized-retail-theft-with-operation-boiling-point">https://www.q13fox.com/news/homeland-security-cracking-down-on-organized-retail-theft-with-operation-boiling-point</a>
GIST	<p>The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency announced on Monday that Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) is launching Operation Boiling Point, aimed at putting an end to organized theft groups.</p> <p>HSI says it will target domestic and transnational criminal organizations that profit from organized retail crime.</p> <p>"Organized retail crime costs American businesses tens of billions of dollars each year," said Steve K. Francis, acting executive associate director of HSI. "Organized theft groups have become more brazen and violent, causing a destructive effect on the economy, resulting in lost jobs and higher prices. HSI works tirelessly to protect American businesses and consumers and is dedicated to put a stop to organized retail crime."</p> <p>HSI says prior to the launch of Operation Boiling Point, they were undertaking 59 separate investigations in the fiscal year of 2021 which led to the seizure of \$9,287,757 in assets.</p> <p>Such rampant organized theft has prompted the U.S. government to partner with private industry groups and other law enforcement agencies to try to put an end to such crimes.</p> <p><b>What is organized retail theft?</b></p>



	<p>According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, organized retail theft rates have skyrocketed in the past year. This type of crime is perpetrated by organized criminal entities who hire out crews to steal large amounts of commodities from all types of retail businesses.</p> <p>In Dec. 2021, authorities in Los Angeles more than a dozen arrests in recent smash-and-grab thefts at stores where nearly \$340,000 worth of merchandise was stolen, part of a rash of organized retail crime in California.</p> <p>The incidents were part of a recent run of large-scale thefts in California and across the nation in which groups of individuals shoplift en masse from stores or smash and grab from display cases. Single operators have also been a growing problems for retailers who say the thieves face little consequence.</p> <p>The U.S. Chamber of Commerce says these crimes cost retail stores an average of over \$700,000 per \$1 billion in sales in 2020—up more than 50% in the last five years.</p> <p>Fifty-four percent of small business owners also <a href="#">experienced</a> an increase in shoplifting in 2021, according to the agency.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>10/18 Multiple violent incidents South Seattle</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/police-investigating-multiple-violent-incidents-in-south-seattle#">https://komonews.com/news/local/police-investigating-multiple-violent-incidents-in-south-seattle#</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE, Wash. — Police are investigating three separate incidents following a violent day in South Seattle, including attempted robberies and shootings that sent two people to the hospital. As of Tuesday night, the suspects were still at large.</p> <p>Neighbors were in shock to hear a 50-year-old man was shot in his own Rainier Beach home around 10 p.m. Monday. Evidence suggests someone shot through a window, hitting the man in the neck.</p> <p>His family told KOMO he was in the ICU as of Tuesday afternoon. It was devastating news for those who know him.</p> <p>“He’s always been very friendly,” neighbor John Steenson explained. “And I wonder how he’s doing.”</p> <p>It was just one shooting in a stretch of violent incidents in the area.</p> <p>Officers first responded to a reported <a href="#">attempted robbery-turned shooting in Columbia City</a> around noon Monday.</p> <p>“I’m not surprised. It seems like a lot of crimes going on around here,” neighbor Issayas Khsai explained.</p> <p>A worker was shot in the chest and hospitalized, while police and the K9 unit spent hours searching for their suspect.</p> <p>“Hopefully, they’ll find some more evidence or witnesses or video footage that can help them sort that out,” Seattle Police Department Detective Valerie Carson said Monday.</p> <p>Lastly, police reported another attempted robbery in front of a home late Monday in the 3800 block of South Morgan Street. Luckily, nothing was taken and no one was hurt.</p> <p>An SPD spokesperson explained there's no evidence linking any of these incidents, for now.</p> <p>Some neighbors say these crimes are unusual for the area, including the Rainier Beach shooting that was also right across from an elementary school.</p> <p>“The situation with gun violence is totally out of control,” Steenson added.</p>

	As for enforcement moving forward, SPD said the primary emphasis patrol in the South Precinct focuses on the SODO neighborhood. As of now, there are no plans to add extra enforcement.
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>10/18 Portland shooting near school: 2 injured</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/2-students-hurt-in-shooting-near-portland-high-school/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/2-students-hurt-in-shooting-near-portland-high-school/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Two students were injured in a shooting Tuesday afternoon near a high school in Portland, Oregon, officials said.</p> <p>Shots were fired near Jefferson High School in north Portland around 4 p.m. after school was dismissed, Portland Public Schools officials said.</p> <p>The two students are expected to survive, District spokeswoman Marifer Sager told The Oregonian/OregonLive.</p> <p>Police received a report that one of the injured students suffered a wound to the leg and entered the gym shortly after the shooting, the Portland Police Bureau said. As of 7:25 p.m., police said they were still trying to locate another student who had suffered a graze wound.</p> <p>Police said officers received reports that two teens wearing face masks fled after the shooting in a car that crashed nearby. The teens then ran away, according to police.</p> <p>Police haven't said if anyone was arrested.</p> <p>Jefferson High sophomore Mesert Melda told the newspaper she was in the gym when other students ran in screaming that there had been a drive-by shooting.</p> <p>A teacher told the students to take shelter in the school's audio recording room, she said.</p> <p>"I was concerned for the people outside," Melda said.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>10/19 Myanmar jail explosions, gunfire</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/explosions-myanmar-main-prison-kill-eight-media-2022-10-19/">https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/explosions-myanmar-main-prison-kill-eight-media-2022-10-19/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Oct 19 (Reuters) - At least eight people were killed and 13 others were injured on Wednesday after explosions and gunfire at Myanmar's biggest jail, according to media reports and an account from a witness.</p> <p>Three officials and five visitors died at Yangon's colonial-era Insein prison after two explosions and gunfire was heard at about 9.40 am local time near the facility's parcels counter, according to news portals Myanmar Now and Irrawaddy News.</p> <p>It was unclear what caused the explosions and representatives of the prison and the military government could not immediately be reached for comment.</p> <p>A witness told Reuters soldiers at the prison had opened fire in response to the blasts.</p> <p>"As soon as I heard the blast, I ran out and that's when I got hurt. The soldiers...at the entrance gate fired shots recklessly," said the witness, who declined to be named because of security reasons.</p> <p>The witness said they were about 10 feet (3 metres) away from the blasts and were not hurt by the explosion but from shrapnel from the gunfire.</p> <p>Police were at the scene and inspecting the site of the explosions shortly afterwards, media reported.</p>

	<p>Prison staff and couriers who were seriously injured were evacuated from the prison, while those not seriously injured were treated at nearby shops, according to BBC Burmese.</p> <p>A number of cases scheduled to be heard in the adjacent court, were cancelled after the explosions, according to media reports.</p> <p>Insein is the country's most notorious prison and thousands of political prisoners have been sent to the facility since last year's military coup.</p> <p>Myanmar has been in chaos since the military overthrew an elected government led by Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's party, and launched a brutal crackdown on dissent.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>10/18 Arrest: Uvalde teen school shooting threat</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/uvalde-school-district-shooting-threat-made-suspect-arrested/story?id=91674651">https://abcnews.go.com/US/uvalde-school-district-shooting-threat-made-suspect-arrested/story?id=91674651</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>A teenager was arrested in Uvalde, Texas, in connection to a threat they allegedly made to carry out a shooting at Uvalde High School, the school district said.</p> <p>Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District sent an email to faculty and parents on Tuesday morning stating the individual made the threat via social media, which was reported on bullying prevention app STOPit. "The Uvalde PD working in conjunction with Texas Department of Public Safety investigators located and arrested the juvenile last night," the email reads.</p> <p>The threat came just shy of 5 months after the school shooting at the district's Robb Elementary which resulted in the deaths of 19 students and two teachers.</p> <p>Uvalde Police Department's Lt. Javier Martinez confirmed the arrest of a male high school student that occurred Monday evening, but told ABC News, "He was threatening another student. He wasn't threatening to shoot the school." He said the Texas Department of Public Safety "is working the incident with our assistance."</p> <p>The Texas Department of Public Safety declined to comment, but instead referred ABC News back to UPD.</p> <p>In an emailed statement to ABC News later Tuesday morning, the Uvalde Police Department stated that a 16-year-old was taken into custody on felony terroristic threat charges. The suspect, who won't be identified because he is a minor, admitted to police he threatened another juvenile over social media, according to the police department.</p> <p>The Uvalde school district did not immediately return ABC News' request for comment.</p> <p>In the email sent to faculty and parents, the district said it immediately notified law enforcement of the report of the threat received via the app. The UCISD website states, "STOPit allows you to privately report bullying going on at school. Throughout the school year, students from any campus will be able to use this app to report dangers, threats, and bullying they may be experiencing."</p> <p>"We understand that this message may cause additional stress for some of you, however we believe it is important to communicate these situations when they occur. We will continue to work with state and local law enforcement agencies to help keep our students and staff safe," the email to faculty and parents says.</p> <p>The Uvalde community has been on edge since the May 24 massacre, as details of the shooting have emerged amid the prolonged investigation. Many families say the investigation has yet to provide the accountability and transparency they continue to plead for.</p>
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HEADLINE	10/18 NY AG: social media 'radicalized' shooter
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/buffalo-mass-shooting-suspect-radicalized-fringe-social-media/story?id=91670651">https://abcnews.go.com/US/buffalo-mass-shooting-suspect-radicalized-fringe-social-media/story?id=91670651</a>
GIST	<p>A scathing report released Tuesday by the New York Attorney General's office slams dark web platforms for "radicalizing" the teenage suspect in the racially motivated Buffalo grocery store <a href="#">mass shooting</a> that left 10 Black people dead.</p> <p>State Attorney General Letitia James released the report, alleging several online platforms played roles in the May 14 mass shooting by radicalizing the suspect, Payton Gendron, as he consumed voluminous amounts of racist and violent content, and then by allowing him to broadcast the deadly attack.</p> <p>The report found anonymous, largely unmoderated websites and platforms, like 4chan, allegedly influenced Gendron. It also said livestreaming platforms like Twitch were "weaponized" to publicize and encourage copycat attacks.</p> <p>"The tragic shooting in Buffalo exposed the real dangers of unmoderated online platforms that have become breeding grounds for white supremacy," James said in a statement accompanying the report's release. "Today I met with the victims' families to share the findings of this report. This report is further proof that online radicalization and extremism is a serious threat to our communities, especially communities of color."</p> <p>New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, who issued a referral earlier this year asking James to study the role online platforms played in the Buffalo attack, called the report "a chilling account of factors that contributed to this incident and, importantly, a road map toward greater accountability."</p> <p>"For too long, hate and division have been spreading rampant on online platforms -- and as we saw in my hometown of Buffalo, the consequences are devastating," Hochul said in a statement.</p> <p>Some loved ones of the victims in the Buffalo rampage praised James' report, saying seeing their relatives murdered in an online livestream compounded their pain.</p> <p>"We are pleased with the investigation on the impact social media may have had on the shooter. That's an area of keen interest for us because we're very interested in the circumstances that allowed for this to take place, systems that may have helped radicalize this person," Garnell Whitfield Jr., whose 86-year-old mother Ruth Whitfield was killed in the attack, told ABC News.</p> <p>Wayne Jones, whose 65-year-old mother Celestine Chaney was also killed in the shooting, said tackling the graphic images and racist comments proliferating on social media is long overdue.</p> <p>"They played an important role in this (massacre). They have immunity, so they just let anything on, including showing my mother being killed along with the rest of the victims," Jones told ABC News.</p> <p>Mark Talley said he will have to live forever with the image he saw online of the gunman fatally shooting his mother, Geraldine Talley, in the head.</p> <p>"I love it," Talley told ABC News of the attorney general's report. "I don't see how you can have websites in which you can say openly racist things. It's nice to see somebody is trying to go after them."</p> <p>The attorney general's findings came with a call for new legislation to address what James called "a lack of oversight, transparency, and accountability" she said allows hateful and extremist views to proliferate online.</p> <p>"The anonymity offered by 4chan and platforms like it, and their refusal to moderate content in any meaningful way ensures that these platforms are and remain breeding grounds for racist hate speech and radicalization," the report said.</p>

James' office examined several online platforms used by Gendron, including 4chan, 8kun, Reddit, Discord, Twitch and YouTube. Investigators also found graphic content of the Buffalo shooting or the suspect's manifesto on other online platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and Rumble.

Gendron, according to the state attorney general's investigators, viewed on 4chan a brief clip of the 2019 mass shooting at a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand. The report found the suspect's radicalization deepened through engagement with virulent racist and anti-Semitic content posted by users on 4chan.

The 19-year-old suspect is accused of planning the massacre for months -- including traveling to the Tops store on the predominantly Black East Side of Buffalo, a more than three-hour drive from his home -- to sketch the layout and count the number of Black people present, according to federal prosecutors.

James' report echoes evidence uncovered by federal and state investigators digging through Gendron's social media accounts.

"Gendron's motive for the mass shooting was to prevent Black people from replacing white people and eliminating the white race, and to inspire others to commit similar attacks," federal prosecutors allege in a criminal complaint filed against the suspect in June.

The suspect, who is white, [has been charged](#) in federal and state courts with multiple counts of murder and hate crimes. He has pleaded not guilty in both cases.

During the Buffalo attack, Gendron allegedly livestreamed the mass shooting on Twitch.

James' report found platforms like 4chan and Twitch lack oversight, transparency and accountability for allowing hateful and extremist views to proliferate online, leading to radicalization and violence.

When discussing its policy on such content, the report quoted a head 4chan moderator saying, "it's not even against the rules" because "the footage itself isn't illegal, any more than footage of any act of violence is illegal."

"In the absence of changes to the law, platforms like 4chan will not take meaningful action to prevent the proliferation of this kind of content on its site," the attorney general's report said.

James called for federal and state reforms to combat online extremism and violence, including state legislation that would penalize individuals who reshare or repost content showing violent acts and criminalize graphic images or videos created by a perpetrator of a homicide.

The attorney general is also recommending changes to Section 230 of the federal Communications Decency Act to increase accountability of online platforms and require companies take reasonable steps to prevent unlawful violent criminal content from appearing on their platforms.

Twitch issued a statement in the immediate aftermath of the Buffalo attack, saying it stopped the gunman's live feed in two minutes.

"We take our responsibility to protect our community extremely seriously, and trust and safety is a major area of investment," Twitch said in its statement, adding it was continuously examining the Buffalo shooting and "sharing those learnings with our peers in the industry to support a safer internet overall."

In an updated statement released Sunday, Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, said that as of Aug. 15 it identified more than 1,151 "militarized social movements" mostly associated with the far-right conspiracy group QAnon and removed about 4,200 pages, 20,800 groups, 200 events, 59,800 Facebook profiles and 8,900 Instagram accounts.

	<p>"We continue to strengthen our enforcement by identifying additional militarized social movements and new terms associated with QAnon," Meta said. "We'll continue consulting experts to inform our strategy and will identify and remove content accordingly."</p> <p>Discord also released a statement in the immediate aftermath of the shooting, saying, "We extend our deepest sympathies to the victims and their families, and we will do everything we can to assist law enforcement in the investigation."</p>
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